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ABSTRACT

This collection of eight essays examines the current and future status of early childhood education and care (educare), focusing on Europe but also addressing issues applicable to the wider world. The essays are: (1) "Early Childhood Intervention: An Overview of Practice North and South" (John Bennett); (2) "Developing the Child's Conception of Learning" (Ingrid Pramling); (3) Do Early Childhood Services Need a Coherent and Comprehensive Approach?" (Peter Moss); (4) "Children's Living Conditions, Secular Changes, and Childhood Mythology" (Dion Sommer); (5) "The Key to Quality is Qualifying the Teachers" (Mogens Nielsen); (6) "Appropriate Developmental Early Childhood Education" (David Weikart); (7) "The Experience of Reggio Emilia, a Place Where Adults and Children Learn Together" (Tiziana Filippini); and (8) "Epilogue" (Steen Larsen), a look at the importance of children's informal learning, which begins at birth. (MDM)

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Educare in Europe

Report of the conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, October 1992

Organised by The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, the Board of Directors of the Danish Colleges for Pre-School and Social Care Teacher Training and the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood and Youth Education.

UNESCO

The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of facts contained in their contributions and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not nessesarily those of Unesco and do not commit the Organisation.

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Preface

This book is a book about young children's right to a high quality of life, written for adults who care for young children and feel responsible for the ongoing improvement of young children's life conditions and of the educational standards we offer them.

The European Childcare conference, "Educare in Europe" was held in Copenhagen from 14 - 16 October 1992. The purpose of the conference was to contribute to the ongoing discussion in Europe on how to care for young children away from their homes. We wished to broaden the discussion by looking at children's need of Early Childhood Education and Care in a modern world. We wanted to divert the discussion from being only about working mothers into a general discussion on development, learning and care.

This turned out to be a subject of interest not only in Europe, but of common interest to the many people who take care of young children throughout the world.

It is a great pleasure for us to write this preface and thereby have the opportunity to thank all the keynote speakers, the presenters of papers and the participants for their great interest and enthusiasm for the subject of young children, education and care.

During the conference it became apparent to the participants that in spite of all the differences of opinions and philosophy, all of us shared a common and burning interest in young children's development. Everybody showed a dedication to the great task it is to improve young children's life conditions in general and to develop high standards of the educational services we offer them.

The subject "Education and Care" proved to be a burning issue, not only for Europe but for communities everywhere. This became clear through the interest shown in participation from all over the world. It also became clear that young children are a group that is in no position to speak for itself in the world's community, and that people who speak for them are not in the world's centre of power.

To fight for young children's rights, especially their rights to education and care, is

not an easy task. The lack of power forms a contrast to the forceful dedication to the great task itself of trying to improve young children's lives.

It is our hope that enthusiasm and engagement in the long run will prove strong enough to convince governments to invest in the future through education and care for their country's children.

Our thanks are especially due to Unesco, whose idea it was to publish this book and at the same time make initial funding available. This funding was immediately supplemented by The Danish National Commission for Unesco and The Danish National Federation of Early Childhood and Youth Education. All three organisations agreed that the idea was excellent and had no hesitation in granting the funds.

Acknowledgement is also due to the untiring efforts of the editor, Lolita Fortuin, without whose enthusiasm, expertise and endless patience this book would not have been possible.

A special thanks to the children in the two pre-school classes at Værebro School and Søndergård School in Copenhagen for their drawings.

The organising committee is happy to thank everybody who took part in the conference and who worked with the book, and we hope that both will contribute to a better life for the world's children.

The Board of Directors of the National Institutes for Social Educators, Early Childhood and Social Education

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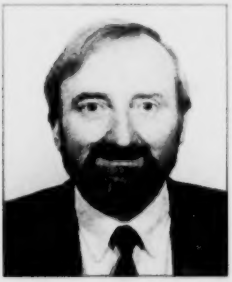
Early Childhood Intervention: An Overview of Practice North and South

John Bennett



John Bennett, a UNESCO coordinator, was known to the organizing committee as a dedicated and hard working person in advocacy for young children. So there could be no better chosen person to open the conference "Educare in Europe". We could all be sure to get not only an overview of childcare in Europe but a global overview. This view should always be kept in mind when we talk in an international setting about quality in early childhood education.

M. ED., Ph.D. John Bennett, Co-ordinator of the UNESCO's Young Child and Family Environment Project. Native of Dublin, Ireland, he worked from 1974-84 at the University of Paris and the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. He joined UNESCO as Chief Publications Officer in the Social Sciences Sector and was appointed to co-ordinate the Young Child and Family Environment Project in 1992.

Introduction

Allow me, first of all, to convey to you the personal thanks of Mr. Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO, for your invitation to open this First European Child Care Conference. The Director General deeply regrets his inability to attend in person, but as many of you know, he has an extremely busy schedule and was obliged to be in Latin America this week. He sends you his warm greetings and wishes me to assure you that UNESCO - an Organisation that is closely associated with Education Ministries and formal education systems - gives first importance also to the care and education of young children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Three years ago, Mr. Mayor took the personal initiative to create a UNESCO Pro-

ject, entitled: the *Young Child and the Family Environment*. The Member States of UNESCO, including Denmark, endorsed his proposal. The realisation was growing that education systems depended not only on technical inputs into school, e.g. the adequacy of buildings and pedagogical materials, proper staff/pupil ratios, the quality of teachers or the relevance of curricula but also on conditions completely external to schools, among which was that essential factor: *the actual state of development of the young children being inducted into pre- and primary schools*. This situation is far from satisfactory as in the past twenty years or so, efforts to ensure the survival of children drew attention away from some fundamental questions. Today, fourteen out of fifteen children survive to the age of one year, but we must ask: survive for what, and in what conditions?

It is becoming evident that many young children - by some estimates up to 50% in certain disadvantaged countries and cities - are surviving with some health or physical handicap. Equally disquieting is the lack of intellectual, psychological and social development of many children at all levels of society owing to insufficient or inadequate interaction with caring, responsible adults. In other words, while survival issues are now acknowledged to be of the first importance, child development has not achieved the same recognition.

Denmark with its long history of investment in early childhood care and education - longer and more intense than almost any other European nation - could have taught us this lesson many years ago, that early childhood is the golden age of development and of learning. During this age, society must attend to the inner nature and needs of the children: their physical needs, especially through provision of sufficient food and health care, but equally important their emotional, social and cultural needs, which are met essentially, not through teaching but through living with caring people who give children self-esteem and lead them into the world of human culture. Today, World Bank and other socio-economic research studies suggest that no other investment in education can give a better social and economic return than early childhood education, especially when girls become the prime target.

Denmark has, however, been more than a model of clever investment in the young child. The child in this country is not just an object of care, not just the target for teaching or preparation for school but is seen as an autonomous, self-directing and social individual who, if the proper context is provided, will carry forward freely the best and noblest dreams of your society and culture. It is not surprising, therefore, that the organization of this first European Conference on Child Care has been assumed by Danish researchers and teachers. On behalf of UNESCO, I congratulate the organisers - the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, The Board of

Directors of the Danish Colleges for Pre-School and Social Care Teacher Training and the Danish National Union of Pre-School Teachers - for their excellent initiative.

Why do nations invest in early child development?

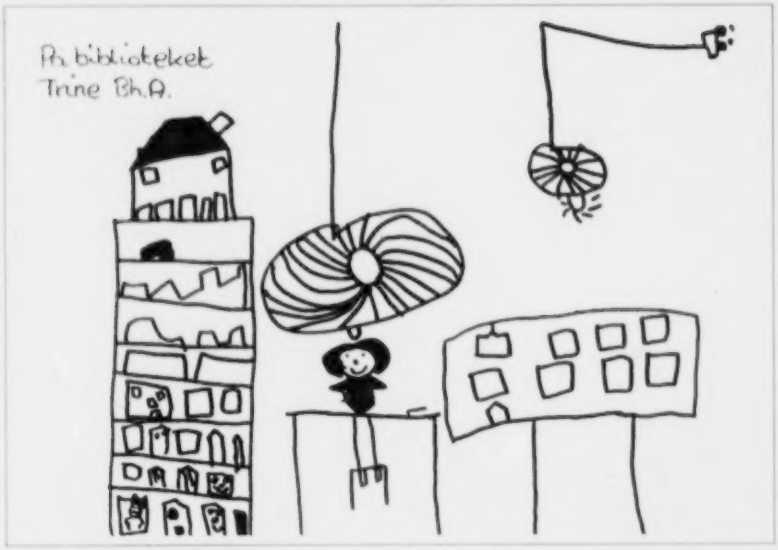
Early childhood care and education is a rapidly expanding sector of activity in the majority of countries. The reasons for such renewed interest in early childhood are passed in review by Dr. Robert Myers in his book *The Twelve Who Survive* which examines programming strategies for early child development particularly in developing countries. Those reasons may be summarized as follows: (see Myers 1989, 1992):

Human development reasons

Longitudinal studies, such as the *Perry Preschool Project*, show that preschool experience has a positive impact on the intelligence, personality and social skills of young children that lasts well into adulthood. In preschool settings of good quality, peer competence, social skills, compliance, intellectual ability and personality of children develop strongly. A fortiori, when families do not provide an environment conducive to the optimum development of their children, early childhood development programmes offer an acceptable solution (Michalowitz, 1991). *Head Start*, one of the most effective educational and social programmes in the United States in recent decades, is a good example of the benefits such intervention can bring to children. Whatever the results of the approaching presidential election, this is one achievement that the new Administration will not suppress but will endeavour to support and improve.

Economic reasons

The basic economic argument for providing child care is that contemporary industrialized societies benefit greatly from female participation in the labour force. Provision of good quality care and education allows such participation and attracts mothers into the market. There are, however, other collateral advantages: investment in the health and education of families, and particularly of mothers and babies, produce significant savings by reducing the recourse to health care in later life or the need to fund expensive rehabilitation programmes. Investment in early childhood development also improves the efficacy of educational systems and helps to prevent juvenile delinquency and harmful social behaviours (Kagitcibasi, 1992). Thus, successful economies and societies reflect higher levels of care and education from the earliest ages.



A visit to the library.

Educational reasons

Early childhood education has been shown (The Coordinators' Notebook, No. 8, 1989) to prepare children, particularly those from poor or minority backgrounds, for primary school, and significantly reduces the rate of dropout and repetition in primary school classes. Preschool centres introduce the child in a non-threatening manner to school organisation, to the official language of the school (which is often not that of the home), and to future cognitive and expressive behaviours, in particular, to the universe of print.

Societal reasons

The profound demographic and social changes of this century necessitate investment in early childhood services. In the industrialized North, women wish to continue to work after motherhood, and their contribution to the national economy is actively solicited by industry and governments. When such a situation exists within the confines of the nuclear or single-parent family, it is inevitable, whether it accords or not with traditional ideologies of the family, that satisfactory day care and preschool arrangements should be in high demand. Again, with the fall in fertility rates in the North, the need for group socialization of children, who are often only children, has won public recognition.

In the developing world, the need for day care is also present although most women in the poorer countries do not have salaried work. Many are obliged, however, to take temporary menial jobs or to work on the land, and thus need support to look after their children. Furthermore, in the export-led economies of the developing world, up to 60% of young women may be employed, generally in low-wage jobs demanding little or no training, but in most countries, they receive no child benefits or support when they become mothers.

Again, for various reasons, e.g. changing family structures, temporary unions and fewer claims on men, traditional support to mothers is on the decline, leaving them in need of help in rearing their children. There is too, a rapidly growing number of female headed households (almost 30% of all households in Latin America and the Caribbean) and the increasing feminization of poverty. Other social phenomena that corroborate the argument in favour of providing services to young children and aid to their families are: the disruption caused to family life by rural-urban migration; the survival of greatly increased numbers of vulnerable children; and the multi-ethnic composition of contemporary societies. Where multiculturalism is concerned, many States see the school, and progressively day care and preschool provision, as a means of inculcating common attitudes, behaviours and language to the children of the nation.

Moral reasons

A "fair start" (Myers 1989) for infants and children is necessary if democratic societies are to avoid distressing class- or gender-linked inequities. Seen from a legal, human rights perspective, the Convention on the Rights of the Child places an onus on the State to intervene specifically in favour of young children and families. Nations signing the Convention ratify Article 18.2 which specifies that States must:

> *"... render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall insure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children".*
>
> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989

Care and Education in the Developing World

The socioeconomic background

Almost all developing countries are characterized by poverty, large rural populations (often multi-ethnic), high fertility rates and populations increasing faster than the national resource base can allow. During the 1980s, living standards declined

seriously, leaving the majority of people in many countries subsisting well below what is considered the poverty line in the West. At the same time, social programmes oriented to the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, were sacrificed to enable structural adjustment and the repayment of international debt. It is not surprising therefore to find throughout the developing world at the beginning of this decade a significant feminization of poverty, frequent family breakdown and very many malnourished or chronically ill children, not to mention street or abandoned children, who, by some estimates are reckoned to number 145 million.

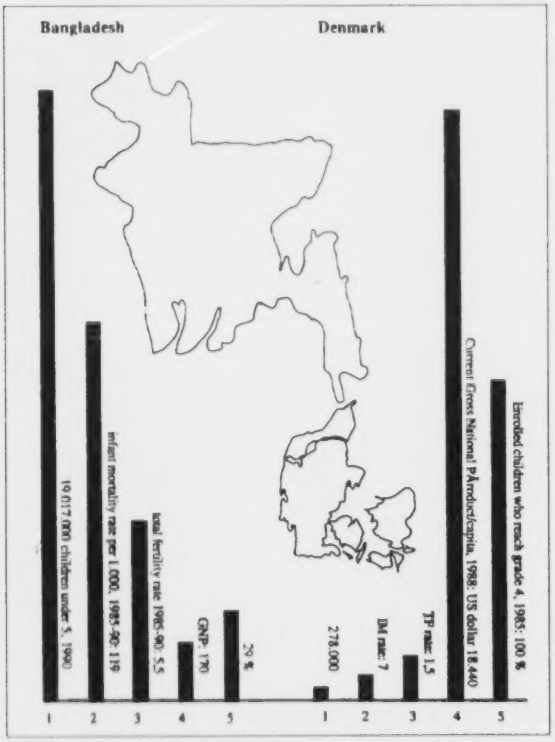
Rather than comment on the major economic and educational indicators of developing countries, a rapid comparison between two countries, Bangladesh and Denmark, may give a clearer idea of the difficulties faced by governments, international agencies, and NGOs in promoting early childhood programmes in the developing world. Bangladesh is little more than three times as large as Denmark - in other words, it is a small country. It has today almost seventy times more children under 5 than Denmark, that is, more children under 5 than in the United States or about the same number as in the entire European Community. Its infant mortality rate is 17 times greater than that of Denmark. 60% of its children are underweight at age 5 and 78% of its women and girls are illiterate; in Denmark, the corresponding figures are just above 0%. The total fertility rate per woman between 1985-90 was 5.5, 29% of children reached Grade 4 in primary school while the GNP per capita in 1988 was $170 per annum. The corresponding figures for Denmark are: total fertility rate 1.5, 98% of children completed Grade 4 and the GNP per capita in the same year was $18,440. (United Nations 1990).

It is true that the above comparison is made between countries at the top and bottom levels of socioeconomic development and some of the indicators used are crude, but the comparison is instructive, particularly when other characteristic disadvantages of the developing world are taken into account.

The response of the international community

International reaction to the situation of the developing world, though insufficient at the level of funding from richer countries, has been energetic. Three major international events in favour of children have marked the last three years: the ratification by the United Nations of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989, the *Jomtien World Conference on Education for All* in 1990 followed in September of the same year by the *World Summit for Children*. Goals for the year 2000 proclaimed during these assemblies included expansion of early childhood development activities, universal access to basic education and completion of primary edu-

cation by at least 80% of primary school age children, with emphasis being place on the education of girls. In addition, the United Nations proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family, for which many countries are embarking on action programmes in support of the family and its ability to function effectively (UN Economic and Social Council/ Commission for Social Development, 32nd Session, Annex II).



Some indicators of socio-economic development in Denmark and Bangladesh.

The national response

The response from the international community has been matched by national and local effort in the developing world. Governments of developing countries have been notable in their support for United Nations activities and many made firm commitments to action following the World Summit for Children. The sheer number of children, economic constraints and weak governmental outreach have

obliged them, however, to enrol the help of UN agencies, external funding sources, international NGOs, their own national universities or professional bodies and, in particular, local voluntary effort, to deliver and maintain care and education services for children, at first at the infant stage but now progressively in basic and primary education. At grass roots level, many new voluntary and professional bodies have emerged in the area of child health and care (UNESCO 1992). Through mobilizing parents and volunteers, and with governmental and/or external support, they have been able to initiate low-cost, community-based programmes in child care and parental education throughout the developing world.

Distribution patterns

Estimates are a characteristic of descriptions of early childhood care and education in many parts of the developing world. "At present", comments Myers (1992), "a detailed and comprehensive description of child care and development in the Third World is impossible". From various surveys, however, particularly UNESCO 1991, the UNICEF annual world and country reports and the discussion of the question in Myers 1992, some reliable indications of the present situation can be obtained.

The overall picture that emerges from the developing world is that despite the enormous difficulties and problems that it encounters, excellent innovative work on behalf of young children is being accomplished in most countries. Aided by the international community, national governments and community volunteers are making tremendous efforts to improve primary health care and early education for the very young. However, because of ever-increasing numbers of children (the developing world accounts for over four-fifths of the world's children), it lags far behind the industrialised countries in terms of the financial investment made, the extent of coverage, the quality of care offered, and research into what is actually taking place, particularly on informal, community-based initiatives.

In the developing world, coverage for the age group 0 to 3 is weakest. With the exception of only a handful of countries, intervention on behalf of infants is concentrated on survival. Organized day care for the children of working mothers seldom exists, and families are obliged to rely on informal care arrangements. A rough estimate would be that less than 1% of mothers receive support (external to that arranged by themselves through family and neighbours) in rearing their infants. The organisation of child-rearing is, therefore, thrown on mothers, who in most developing countries are undernourished, poor and overworked. Programmes established in countries such as India, demonstrate, however, the critical contribution made by intervention directed toward both mother and child e.g. pre-natal care, education, supplementation, psychosensory stimulation, encouragement and teaching of inter-

action etc. Such programmes can make a great difference to the development and well-being of the child, not to mention their effectiveness in fertility regulation and in preventing maternal fatigue and mortality.

Development programmes for preschool children aged 3 to 6 are more numerous but still far too few, especially in African countries. More and more of these programmes are community based, comprehensive in aim and directly involve the parents. Worldwide, however, only a handful of developing countries attain a 30% coverage, though among them figure India, while China probably covers over 25% of this age group either through preschools or other services. Latin America achieves relatively high coverage of the age group, ranging from 11% in Honduras to over 35% in Cuba, Chile, Colombia and Bolivia. Sub-Saharan Africa is least well-served, especially in the least developed countries where rates of less than 1% coverage are recorded. Recent surveys show, however, that a significant expansion in integrated care for the age group is taking place, even in Africa, and that there is no discrimination against girls in intake (UNESCO 1990, 1992).

For this older age group, the information available would also indicate that a large percentage of preschool centres are located in primary schools. The erosion of living standards in the 80s, however, and the sheer rise in the number of preschool children resulted in stagnation in centre-based State programmes and a drastic fall in quality. Catering to demand has therefore been taken up by private preschools and kindergartens, which are generally unlicensed. Many such preschools are situated in urban centres and are funded by fees paid by parents. Their programmes aim at readiness for school rather than at providing for more basic needs such as health care and nutrition. One may be allowed therefore to surmise that the poorest and most needy urban families still do not have appropriate early childhood programmes nor practical access to preschool institutions.

Care and education of young children in the industrialised world

Characteristics of child care in the major countries

Though care and education services for young children are abundant in all the leading industrialised nations, major differences exist between countries in terms of policy, provision, quality and regulation. It is customary, for example, to contrast the extensive coverage and good quality care provided through public funding in Scandinavia, Japan and the continental European Community countries with the less satisfactory care provided in the United States (and to a lesser extent the United King-

dom) where child care and education is mostly seen either as a welfare service or a matter for private arrangement.

The *United States* operates a two-tier system of child care: on the one hand, a publicly funded welfare system for poor or minority children, and on the other, private child care and education arrangements for the majority middle class, funded by parents. Hence, although 52% of American mothers with young children participate in the labour force, only 12% of infants and toddlers receive care in public centres or preschools (Olmsted and Weikhart 1989). Again, essential aspects of child care in continental Europe, such as family support or employment entititlements of parents are weak or absent in American social policy. Thus, American mothers do not have paid maternity leave while American family households are falling rapidly behind non-family households in economic terms, receiving not even a quarter of the federal support given to the elderly. Reasons such as non-interference in the market, political tolerance of deep socioeconomic inequalities, idealization of the family and the maternal role, respect for ethnic and individual freedoms are advanced to explain the reluctance of federal government to fund child care. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that coverage, even at the level of primary health care, is both uneven and unsatisfactory. Though the better parts of both public and private networks provide excellent education and development opportunities, lack of regulation o' the greater part of the system prevents any real monitoring of quality or trainii g of care providers. More positively, kindergarten at 5 years is provided free to all American children, and a growing number of employers are beginning to provide child care and education centres for the children of their employees.

Child care and education is more highly organized in countries such as *Japan*, *Israel* and the *Scandinavian* countries. For different reasons, these countries have decided to fund accessible child care and education systems that are of high quality in their formal (size of premises, child-staff ratios, staff training, curricula etc.), dynamic (appropriate interaction patterns between staff and children), and family support aspects. In Sweden, for example, fathers have the right to two weeks paid leave at the birth of a child, while one parent has the right to take paid leave for 9 months full-time or 18 months part-time to look after the child. Likewise, Japan succeeds in enrolling in publicly funded day nurseries and kindergartens almost 50% of its three-year olds, 89.7% of four-year olds and 94.5% of five year-olds (Japan 1991).

In the *European Community*, child care and education receives special attention within the framework of enhancing industrial competitivity by bringing women into the work force on equal terms with men, and also as an essential part of educational, demographic and family policy (Peter Moss in Pierrehumbert, 1992). The

Nursery school.

major division within the Community in child care and education lies between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Ireland on the one hand and the remaining continental countries on the other. In the former group, most mothers of young children do not work outside the home, and provision for public child care has been traditionally weak. These countries have, however, established special classes in schools, which all children from age 4 are free to attend. For the care and education of infants and younger children, private arrangements are normal, though there exist also many subventionned and regulated play groups. In the second group of countries, public investment in care and education is much greater: in France, Belgium, Denmark and Italy 80% of children from age 3 are enrolled in nursery or preschool centres, and the percentage grows as the cohort advances in age. The first two countries also provide places in nurseries for one quarter of the children aged 0 to 2, while Denmark is able to provide places for almost half its infants in this age group.

Issues for the 90s

Allow me to end by outlining some issues that could become important in the public debate on early childhood care and education during the 1990s.

Mother or creche?

Feelings are generally aroused when there is question of using public day care for infants. Mothers ask: Am I abandoning my child? and societies expatiate on family and social values. What one is witnessing is a conflict between economic necessity

and certain cultural representations of the ideal family, which often fail to reflect the realities of the contemporary household. While research has not given a fully conclusive answer to the consequences on the young child of early non-parental child care (Belsky 1988, quoted in Melhuish and Moss 1991), two research facts are clear, namely:

> that exclusive maternal care of children is not the norm for the human species or even for advanced societies (Badinter 1983), and secondly, that it is important for the child in the early months of its life to internalize the mother's image and to experience the love and care of both parents during childhood.

It may be suggested, therefore, that the real issue is not mother *versus* creche, but whether nursery and parents together can give quality care to the child.

Public or private?

Respect for the private sphere and the free market are often invoked in defence of governmental reluctance to intervene in the child's early years. The experience of the industrialised world would suggest, however, that the unwillingness of governments to assume responsibility leads to serious inequalities in coverage and quality. Thus, thinkers and leaders who have spent their lives in combating State encroachment recognise that the State has a legislative, policy-making and regulating role to play in society (Havel 1992). Governments have the responsibility to serve the families and children of the nation and, in certain fields, their role becomes critical in the development of early childhood services. For example:

> research and statistical information; policy making, planning and monitoring; curricula and teaching materials development; institution and capacity building; interfacing with primary education; adequate and continued training of personnel; regulation of quality, materials and environment

are all areas that governments can best co-ordinate, especially in multicultural and multilingual settings.

On the other hand, given the fact that the care of the age group 0 to 3 is still almost exclusively the responsibility of mothers in the developing world, home-based intervention would seem a more promising area of intervention than centre-based provision. *Maternal health and educational status are critical objectives in such intervention.* It is well documented that enhanced education levels of mothers are linked significantly with falling fertility rates, decreasing infant and mother mortality, enhanced levels of infant and child development.

In the industrial world, a decentralised approach giving major responsibilities to parents and local communities seems also more responsive to parental needs. Decentralization must, of course, be backed by governmental funding and appropri-

ate legislation to reconcile employment with child care responsibilities. Thus, countries such as Sweden have opted for a maximum integration of the family in the child's early development without sacrificing the parents' right to work. Through legislation and financial inducement, they have also engaged the father's responsibility in the task of rearing offspring. Other industrial countries such as France have been more centralizing and less sensitive to parental participation but the point is being reached in child care provision in France and similar countries where family support and/or leave entitlement for parents may be among the most cost-effective means of providing quality care for the young child, especially if backed up by home-visiting services to parents and alternative programmes to reach neglected groups. Likewise, a community-based or NGO approach is better able to provide supplementary health or human service intervention for children with special needs and include them in early child development programmes.

Preschool education or early child development?

Although, as Lamb and Sternberg point out (in Pierrehumbert, 1992), public authorities find it easier to allocate funds to child care when it is presented as education - in industrialised societies, economic reward in adult life is perceived as being significantly linked with learning achievement at school - the term *"early child development"* would seem to correspond more to contemporary understandings of how children develop and learn, and to cover a wider range of children.

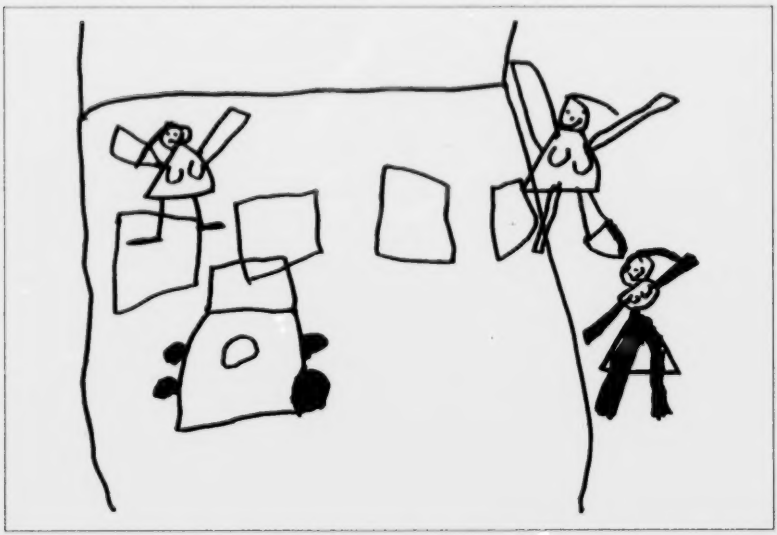
Much depends, of course, on how words are understood and what is the state of the actual practice. There is, for example, the very different meaning given to the word education by English and French speakers. For the English speaker, the term preschool education will seem to channel the young child toward cognitive development, and away from family, social and cultural experience which are the bedrock of human growth. In situations where educational quality is threatened, however, parents and professionals will be anxious to stress education.

The use of the term *"preschool education"*, however, does run the risk of removing the age group 0 to 3 from consideration, as preschool is generally reserved for older children from 4 to 6. In such a division, care for infants and toddlers is generally ignored by public authorities or remains underfunded, becoming custody or care oriented. Yet the research findings suggest that this younger age is the golden age of intellectual curiosity and development in which the bases of language acquisition and social skills are laid. With the pre-natal period, it is too the moment when the basic health of the child is safeguarded or endangered. There is little need for me to inform this gathering of early childhood teachers that already at three years, wide differences exist between children where learning capacities are concerned. A for-

tiori in the developing world where not only lack of parental interaction can be present to retard the child's development but also serious nutritional and health deficiencies.

Again, the term *"preschool education"* tends to narrow intervention to a model resembling the traditional school, that is, a national institution under Ministry of Education authority, the aim of which is to prepare the young child, through a cognitively based curriculum and a modified discipline, for successful entry into school. Thus, many Ministries of Education rather than recognising the special and varied needs of young children, have simply extended downwards the age at which the child can attend primary school. In some contexts, this expedient has worked relatively well, particularly when children come from stable homes and do not suffer from poverty and ill-health, where teachers are properly trained and teacher/pupil ratios are relatively low.

Research suggests, however, that the traditional primary school approach is unsuitable for the developmental needs of young children and, in particular, gives a poor start to deprived children. Hence in the developing world cognitive oriented pre-



My mother leaves to go to work.

school education, particularly if it is just an extension of primary school, makes little sense. Many, perhaps a majority of primary schools have overloaded classes (80 pupils or more), poorly trained teachers, inadequate water supplies, conditions in which the children easily become ill. Early childhood education must therefore begin with maternal and family education, in which a nutrition and primary health care approach is the first necessity, although such an approach does not exclude education. Whether the context is one of education or health, it is the quality of the interaction that is important for the development of the child - which in a sense is a comforting thought. Love and care, the main motors of the child's development, can be found in harsh economic circumstances.

Quality:

The outstanding issue in all countries during the 90s will be the issue of quality. Research shows that the quality of care (adequacy of care to needs, of attention from the cage giver) received by the child whether in the home or at school is a determining factor of its well-being and development. Two factors converge, however, to prevent quality improvement, namely, budget constraints and lack of supervision.

My grandfathers birthsday.

Budget constraints

In a an economic climate dominated by recession, short-term efficiency and cost-reductions, there is a tendency to reduce child care and education to the minimal elements of physical care and surveillance. Budgetary constraints tempt public authorities to reduce coverage and/or numbers of staff, particularly among the trained - and more expensive - educational personnel who are responsible for motor, social and intellectual development.

Lack of supervision

Another problem affecting quality is that demand exceeds supply, thus forcing parents into unsupervised and unregulated private arrangements. Even in countries like Sweden, private care arrangements, though subject to regulation and advice, are difficult to monitor. In most countries, such arrangements have become the rule, allowing little opportunity to improve the knowledge and expertise of child-minders.

Research

Another important issue for the 90s is the need for more research, including further theoretical research, e.g. the effects of child care and education, what are the links with primary schooling?. Above all information of a practical nature is needed in most countries to enable efficient planning: the actual number of children in the various age groups and their distribution across the territory; what are the real needs and issues; who are the major actors in the field; which children are being covered by existing care; the infrastructure and appropriate human resources available.

Funding

Present practice shows that countries do not need to be wealthy to establish and implement programmes to improve the health, well-being and educational potential of their children. The alliance of governmental will and effective community initiative is sufficient to give good results. Jamaica, for example, has succeeded in enrolling more than one third of its children in preschool programmes, a greater proportion than many industrialised countries. Israel, likewise, though not among the leading industrial nations, has managed to establish excellent countrywide child development programmes.

Yet, support from external funding sources will be vital during the 90s to establish national policy, planning and implementation in the poorer countries, especially in Africa. Calls for a new international initiative during the 90s may encourage international funding agencies, bi-lateral funders and national governments to invest in the field. The well-being that early childhood care and education gives to countless

young children, the entry point it provides for the education of women and girls, its links with community development and the economic savings that it brings are too important for resource mobilization not to take place.

Other societal issues e.g. *the growing phenomenon of the absent father*, or more narrow educational questions e.g. *the proper linking of early childhood education with school entry* will also come to the fore in the 1990s. But I have already overstayed my time. May I wish again this Conference much success in its deliberations. UNESCO is at your disposal to help in disseminating the keynote research papers and your recommendations.

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Developing the Child's Conception of Learning

Ingrid Pramling

Ingrid Pramling is well known in Scandinavia for her research on how young children learn. Her research is based on a Scandinavian tradition of childcare combined with a modern approach to learning theories. Ingrid Pramling's research on "How children learn to learn" was especially selected for presentation by the organising committee.

Assistant professor Dr. Phil Ingrid Pramling was born in Sweden in 1946 and educated there in the fields of nursery and infant education, teaching theory and practice and recently psychotherapy. Since 1977 Ingrid Pramling has taught at the University of Gothenburg. Research mainly comprises subjects related to the young child's conception of its surroundings, the development of the young child's learning and the integration of these insights in practice. Ingrid Pramling is chairperson of the Swedish OMEP group.

Introduction

When thinking about the notions of care and education, the areas of child development and education came to my mind. Looking at studies on children in day-care centres carried out in the field of psychology it struck me that attachment theories are used as an evaluation instrument to an overwhelming extent. In many studies it is shown that day-care children are less secure in their attachment to their mothers, which is interpreted as a result of being separated from their mothers. Day-care children will of course be less upset if a stranger comes into the room or the mother leaves the child for a couple of minutes, since this is what the child has experienced from the first day in day-care. I think this is a good example of how the field of developmental psychology can give us a false picture, when the learning aspect is not taken into consideration.

On the other hand, within the field of education focus is on children's learning, although reference is often made to general developmental stages. Most research in the educational field studies school children, and comparatively little has been done on the pre-school years.

Education is traditionally viewed as an outside influence, while development is based on a biological view. Child development observes what the child does or is capable of doing, while education observes the potential of the child or how he or she can change.

It is interesting that these two predominant fields of research maintain their perspective also when applied within early childhood education, although many theories today claim that it is more or less impossible to distinguish learning from development, or to distinguish the child from his or her environment, the biology from the milieu. Perhaps there is no pure development without an influence from the outside?

If this is the case, then there is no time in life when the child is only developing, and another when he is only learning. Another way of looking at learning and development is to say that development is learning and learning is development. Learning and development are both each other's cause and effect. If research is to be of any value to people working in the field of early childhood education, we have to develop new approaches in which the child is studied in the specific context of pre-school or day-care, and on its own merits.What, then, is the view of learning and development within the field of early childhood education - if we look at what is going on there? (day-care and pre-school/kindergarten)

There are two main perspectives within the field of early childhood education. The first one focuses on children's development as an internally driven process. The most important means here is children's play. And play is here looked upon as the child's way of processing his experiences. Jerome Bruner called this perspective "the natural child" a couple of years ago, when he studied staff in this field. Taking this perspective in an early childhood education programme often means having goals for the child, such as becoming secure, learning to communicate, to co-operate, to be creative and so on.

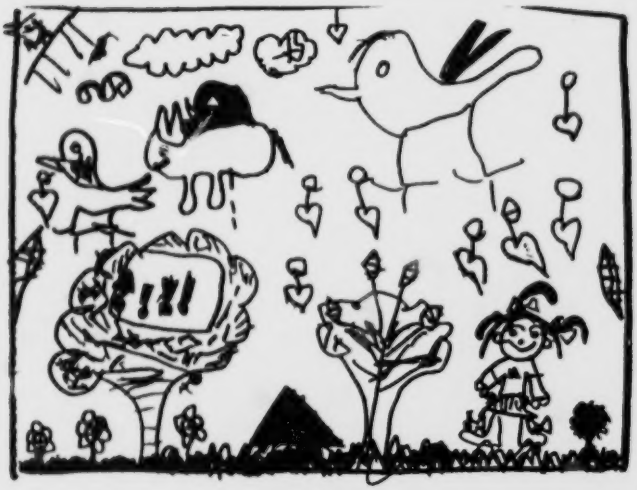
In other words, goals which are difficult to reject but almost impossible to evaluate. The theories behind this perspective are psychodynamic and partly also Piagetian, particularly the part of Piaget's theory that deals with the child's need to act.

This means that the child needs someone who cares for him and who arranges an environment within which the child can be active. I think this view is a loophole for our own field. If we accept it, we do not need teachers to work with young children, we only need someone who cares for them. And I would claim that this is what we see all over the world, that care is emphasised in day-care. And since mothers have cared for their children at all times, we do not need trained teachers. Some countries however, have, recognised the importance of having trained teachers to work in day-care centres also. International comparisons also show how the quality of day-care is related to the adults' level of training.

The other perspective is borrowed from the general school system and focuses on learning. Children's learning is viewed as a transference of skills and knowledge from outside. Traditionally, academic skills are supposed to be learned by practising and working on them, for example in "before-school-books", which unfortunately is the kind of material sold in increasing numbers by companies all over the world. This means that the teacher is given a central role by being the one who structures tasks for the child to work on. By repeating and practising the child is supposed to learn. The notion of learning is burdened with the idea that there exists a body of knowledge which has to be transferred to children during their education. The aim in this approach to learning is often that children learn academic skills, like the alphabet, numbers and counting procedures, facts, etc. David Elkind, however, is one of a number of researchers who raise a warning finger about pushing children into traditional academic learning in pre-school.

Today many researchers talk about a cognitively oriented approach to learning in pre-school. David Weikart (1988) is one of them, although he emphasises the whole child. He has summarised research showing that direct instruction in kindergarten greatly benefits a variety of measures later on in school. He believes that pre-school children need a lot of individual attention from their teachers. "Young children need to interact with people, not with a sheet of paper, and teachers need to maximise the amount of time they spend with each child" (op.cit. p. 92). The High/scope programme is one example of a cognitively oriented pre-school programme which does not fit into any of the earlier discussed perspectives (Weikart, 1989). It is, however, based on the Piagetian view of general stages of mental skills. The child's intellectual level is related to structural changes in the mind (Piaget, 1975). This means that thinking is regarded as context and content independently.

Lilian Katz (1988) also refers to different longitudinal studies when she suggests that pre-school should be intellectually oriented in such a way that children have to interact in small groups in which they work together on a variety of projects that



Pigen går tur og plukker blomster. Fuglene er gode venner og leger med hinanden. Der falder hjerte-blade ned fra himlen og det betyder en god dag.

PINAR TRINE

The girl goes for a walk and picks flowers. The birds are good friends and play with each other. Heartleaves fall down from heaven, that means a good day. Pinar and Trine.

help them make sense of their own experience. She suggests a project approach around different themes or topics over an extended period of time. The project should ideally consist of a reconstruction of environmental aspects within the pre-school setting, or an investigation of aspects of the environment which includes the development of various forms of reporting the findings of the investigations to classmates. The phases of the project are: planning, constructing or building the parts of the project, and finally include role playing, or talking about roles appropriate to the various elements of the project. Katz's (op.cit.) argument is that the curriculum should involve children in the kind of activities that engage and challenge their minds more fully than either academic or play activities usually do.

I agree with Katz (op.cit.), although I have difficulty in seeing how this project differs from the pre-school tradition developed by Fröbel (1974) and by Schrader-Breymann (Johansson, 1992). During the late 19th century Schrader-Breymann formulated a principle for work in pre-school in terms of "Monatsgegenstand" (Middlepoint for work), which in Sweden was later changed to "Centre of Interest". Today, this subject-matter integrated approach is called "Theme". My claim is that people within the field of early childhood education are looking for a **new** approach to learning that is neither academic study nor play, although we do have our roots in a cognitively oriented approach to learning. I do not suggest that we go back to the approach to learning recommended by Fröbel and Schrader-Breymann more than 100 years ago, but rather utilise all new research on children's learning in the light of this tradition, which seems to have disappeared.

It looks as if the two research fields of developmental psychology and education can be found in practice in pre-school and day-care, although today there are numerous efforts to develop something different. Early childhood education is not the same as being with one's parents, nor is it the same as being in school. Early childhood education has actually in practice a long tradition which differs totally from the school tradition (Johansson, 1992).

Before I present my contribution, which attempts to develop a pre-school approach to learning and development, I would like to return to the subject og learning and development by relating an experience in the Polynesian Islands last year. Among other islands, I visited the Kingdom of Tonga, where I studied pre-schools. In the yard there were about 80 children, from 3 to 5 years old. At nine o´clock the teacher rang the bell. All the children, with the exception of a young blond boy, stood in rows. And however hard the teacher tried to get him into the row, he got out of it. After a while she walked over to him, hugged him and said to me: "You see, his father is from Germany, and he has not been with us long enough to know how things are here in our pre-school".

The children then walked into two different classrooms. The teacher I followed had 40 children, 4-5 years old, in her classroom. They all sat on the floor in a circle, singing songs, reading verses and listening to dramatised stories from the Bible. None of the children crawled around or touched each other. They seemed very concentrated during the whole 40 minutes the lesson lasted. As a Swedish pre-school teacher, it was very difficult not to be tremendously impressed. No one in Sweden would be able to keep 40 children interested for such a long period, not even a primary school teacher.

Another day I walked around in the city and found another aspect of this story. A party had been arranged outside the royal palace. The royal family was there. Young boys and girls danced and men made speeches. I was told that the acting Prime minister, who was the brother of the King, had resigned, while the new one taking over was a cousin of the King. At the time I was not impressed. I also learnt that for the whole population there were three representatives in the government. Thinking back on what I saw in pre-school, I was convinced that these children will learn to be perfect members of the Tongian society.

Alice in Wonderland is one of my favourites. In one chapter someone asks her:
"Would you please tell me which way I ought to choose?"
" It depends on where you want to go."
"I don't care about that very much."
"Then it doesn't matter which way you choose either", says Alice.

We have to bear in mind that there is no way to look at early childhood education without a context, without a society and the current values inherent in that society. In what way do we want the next generation to think about learning and development? Which values ought to be developed in this respect? Naturally, what I will now develop is based on the goals and guidelines we have in our country about children's learning. We wish children to become critical thinkers and independent human beings, who will be able to solve their own and others' problems. One aspect of children's learning which is probably more important than anything else in pre-school is learning how to learn.

Theoretical view

The approach to learning in the next part of this paper is actually the result of research on university students' learning. A research group in my department asked students 20 years ago what learning and knowledge meant to them. They

JEG ER EN TUR I SKOVEN. JEG KRAVLER I ET TRÆ.
FUGLEN ER BANGE FOR AT RÆVEN SKAL FINDE
FUGLEREDEN MED UNGERNE I. JEG HAR LØBET
EFTER EN SOMMERFUGL, MEN DEN FLØJ OP
I TRÆ OG SATTE SIG. NU ER JEG TRÆT AF SKOVEN,
SÅ NU VIL JEG HJEM IGEN. MARIE
FUGLENE FØLGER MIG HJEM.

I walk in the forest and crawl up in a tree. The bird is afraid that the fox will find the nest with the small birds. I ran after a butterfly, but it flew up in a tree and sat down. Now I am tired of the forest and want to go home. The birds follow me home. Marie.

also asked the students to read a text. It was found that the way the students thought about these phenomena influenced their learning. In a way, we already knew from Piaget's work that this influence occurs in early childhood education. We all know that children think in different ways from adults. But what does that mean in everyday work with children? Instead of focusing on acting or the general stages in Piaget's theory I will focus on children's individual ways of thinking, which was the perspective Piaget assumed in the beginning of his research.

With the total sum of our experience as adults and as children, we have a taken-for-granted approach to the world around us. The ways we experience, see, discern, catch, perceive, distinguish and understand are related to our experience from the first day of life. Talking about learning from this perspective means that

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our taken-for-granted assumptions about different phenomena or aspects of reality fall apart, and in the next second become integrated into a new taken-for-granted way of looking at any specific phenonomenon (Marton & Helmstad, 1991).

The child's way of thinking is formed by the experience he or she has gained from everyday life. Children's experience has built up a structure of relevance with implications for what they find interesting or not, how they go about working on a task, what they learn, etc. Hundeide (1989) shows, for example, in his research that children who are given blocks of materials of different sizes designed for seriation, and are then observed for what they do with it, hardly ever use them for seriation but for the construction of phenomena and objects from their environment. He ends his discussion of this study by saying: "Isn't it strange that so much emphasis in research is on children's logical thinking although this is not the aspect that is most visible if you observe how children relate themselves to the surrounding world".

In the study called: "Learning to learn. A study of Swedish pre-school children", (Pramling, 1989) it was shown how through work with their experience of life in relation to their own learning, as well as the content worked with, children in experimental groups became better learners than a comparison group. The children in the experimental groups not only developed an understanding of their own learning, but also understood new "stories" in a qualitatively more advanced way, which means that they discovered other (new?) kinds of relationships in the content.

An experience-oriented approach to learning

The assumption of this approach is that children's experience (the way they see, understand, conceptualise) is more basic than skills and knowledge, and that this is what pre-schools ought to work on. In other words, they should systematically work on the development of children's awareness of different phenomena in the world around them - on making the world more transparent.

The starting point of an experience-oriented approach is to define the what-aspect of learning, that is, what idea do we want to make visible for the children. What is it we want them to understand - to be aware of?

The end as well as the means is children's thinking. If you want to develop a child's thinking, the child has to think and reflect. This approach has to begin in toddler

groups by the adult being the one who labels and expands the child's world. The teacher needs to be the one who asks questions and also answers them for the youngest children. The reflective approach can be used early, but for small children, the content of course differs from the content for the children I am talking about here, who are 4 - 6 years old.

The content

The pre-school "curriculum" focuses on phenomena in the surrounding world and is partly oriented towards subjects taught in school. But I want to emphasise strongly that it is not identical with the school curriculum, since in school the fact is that children learn, for example, the skills of reading, writing and counting.

The alternative approach focuses on providing children with conditions - to develop the basis for learning.

Within the areas of *reading and writing* this alternative involves making the children aware of these skills - to make them visible for children as part of their own experience. What are the features of these skills? How can the relation between oral and written language become visible? How can it be made visible to children that the flow of speech is divided into words? What is the function of being able to read and write? What is a symbol?

Support for this kind of content is found in Dahlgren and Olsson's (1985) study of how children conceptualise reading. They show that children without any idea of why one ought to read and how to go about it developed learning problems in school. On the other hand, all children who had the idea that reading would enable them to read books, messages etc., rapidly learned to read in primary school. Francis (1982), using another research approach, has reached similar findings, i.e. that children's ideas about school activities have a strong bearing on what they actually learn there.

Another content is the *experience of numbers*, which is not the same as performing counting procedures - learning the operations. The alternative view in this approach is that arithmetic skills are developed by getting children to grasp the meaning of numbers and their meaning in different aspects of counting.

Neuman (1987) has shown in her research into the subject of arithmetic, that when a child in school ran into difficulties when trying to solve arithmetic problems, the

reason was not a lack of counting procedures, but that the child had not developed a basic understanding of numbers or the counting activity. Neuman claims that children who have not conceptualised numbers as a pattern, but have to count every number to solve a problem, will run into difficulties when they have to work with higher numbers (over 10) later on. To be able to do this, children must be able to imagine numbers. According to Neuman, learning to imagine numbers can be done by getting children to conceptualise patterns, for example,"finger-pictures". A similar view of basic arithmetic can be found in the Japanese pre-school, where arithmetic is not seen as a question of letting children manipulate and exercise with symbols, but as imagining arithmetic problems in dialogue with the children (Gordon, 1987).

Doverborg (1987) studied two pre-schools with regard to children's development of arithmetic skills. One of them worked in school-oriented fashion and trained different arithmetic aspects during lessons. The other one utilised situations in everyday life to make these aspects visible, when laying the table, when doing needlework, baking, cooking etc. The evaluation showed that children who had been involved in the latter approach to arithmetic solved arithmetic tasks better than children who had worked in a way similar to the one normally applied in school.

A third content is to understand *aspects of the natural world*, which could involve making children aware of the ecological cycle (Pramling, 1989), growth, living and dead things (Stepans, 1985), the change of seasons, changes in nature (Maurice, Stacheli & Montangero, 1990), time (Dionnet & Montangero, 1990), aspects of science (Driver, 1982; Lybeck, 1981), etc. Within every area, children should be not given information about facts, the focus should be on developing their thoughts.

A fourth content is to understand aspects of *the man-made world*, such as the child's surroundings in a perspective of time (history) and space (cultural and geographical aspects). This could mean focusing on phenomena in society such as the shop (Pramling, 1991), professions (Furth, 1980), social interactions (Damond, 1977) such as co-operation (Klerfelt, 1991), artwork (Gustafsson, 1992) etc.

The fifth and last area of *content* is children's *understanding of their own learning* That is, making them aware of both what they learn and how this learning comes about (Pramling, 1983). Earlier studies have shown that the child's metacognitive level is of great importance to learning (Brown & Reeve, 1985; Pramling, 1987; Pramling, 1989).

Guidelines for practice

There is no simple method to adopt, but the teacher's awareness should be directed towards:

1) becoming informed about existing research on, and descriptions of, children's thinking (see the section above), and
2) developing their own methodological knowledge in areas such as methods of interviewing (Doverborg & Pramling, 1985), principles for planning themes etc.

When planning a content the first step is to decide what *the goal* of the theme is in terms of what possible understanding one should work towards with children. What "figure" is to be made "visible" and what ought to be its background? Using notions from gestalt psychology. What kind of relationship can a child in the age-group in question grasp? One goal for instance, could be to understand the relation between bees and nature, within a theme on bees.

The second step should be to find out whether the children have already achieved a prior understanding of this particular relationship. Learning about children's thinking could be done by means of interviews, drawings, drama, problem-solving, through play and so on. When, in an earlier study, interviews were carried out on the relationship between bees and nature, it was shown that all the children knew that there was a relationship, but they all took the point of view of the bee (Doverborg & Pramling, 1988). This means that they knew the bees needed nature, while none had the idea that nature needed the bees, for example, for pollination. When the teacher has completed this interview, she will know what there is left to work on to reach her first goal.

The third step in the planning process is to create concrete situations around which children will be able to think and reflect. Finally, it is necessary to document all activities so that the children's learning, i.e. the thoughts developed by the children after being involved in a specific theme, may be evaluated at a later date.

The third aspect the teacher must be aware of is that

3) *children learn from each other,* which means that, instead of similarities, the differences between children are held in focus.

The three aspects described above require knowledge and skills, which the teacher must have. What she then must do is:

1) *get the children to talk and reflect in concrete situations*, which means she must be able to put other kinds of questions than those teachers normally do,

2) *expose the ways in which the children are thinking and use these ways as a content in education*, and
3) *Involve the children in activities* which directly influence them (material, situations, play, etc.).

To thematize different contents means not only introducing a specific content, as described earlier, but also being able to utilise everyday situations to give children the opportunity of becoming aware of different phenomena in the world around them and to grasp their own questions and ideas.

Ideas as content

Education must always begin with the child's own experience. This is a fact that can be read in all official documents for both school and pre-school in Sweden. Every teacher in the country would also agree upon this statement. But what does it really mean? Hansen (1992) asked a group of pre- and primary school teachers what they mean by beginning with the child's experience. She identified five categories of description:

1) To identify the child's level of maturity and meet the child on this level in relation to learning.
2) Learning must be based on children's earlier knowledge.
3) Teaching must relate to children's interest in order to increase their motivation.
4) Since children's social backgrounds vary, they have different potentials for benefiting from school.
5) Learning must be experience based on ways which exploit all the child's senses, not only the mind.

None of the above categories relate to the developmental perspective of experience held by us in this paper. To us, experience means the way the children formulate their life-worlds in relation to the content worked on. In other words, how the child's experiences are reflected in the child's way of expressing himself. It means that the teacher has an aim, something she wants children to become aware of. She creates situations, tasks, questions, which children have to work with, practically and intellectually. They have to *think and reflect* and share their ideas. In a situation like this, the most important thing is not that a child comes up with a right answer, but with *a flow of ideas*. It is by explaining and making ideas visible that children get a chance to realise their ways of thinking in relation to others. I will now illustrate work with this approach, with a couple of observations from practice in pre-school, and with the contents earlier described.

Number and counting

One aspect of number conception is division. Earlier studies have shown that pre-school children solve division problems from the perspective of sharing, in the sense of sharing equally in social terms (Doveborg, 1987, Neuman, 1987). This means that children find dividing uneven numbers problematic. However, the concrete item to be divided is of great importance. We can see below how twelve children solved the problem of dividing a cake into eight pieces. Three children divided the cake as a whole in eight pieces, while eight children divided eight similar pieces and then commented the rest of the cake with "that's left over". One child doesn't share at all equally but puts eight marks straight over the cake and gets nine pieces.

The teacher can then utilise these three different ways of solving the problem by showing all the children how the problem was solved in different ways and also by asking the children to express how they feel about their own way of solving it. Dividing a cake is an excellent example of how the child's "life-world" becomes clear. A cake can be used for cutting out pieces, but they do not need to be equal since grown-ups can eat bigger pieces than children, and it is completely realistic to save some cake.

Order is another aspect of mathematics. After having worked on this topic for a while, children in a group are requested to make a drawing of the sequence of how a butterfly develops. The teacher asks them to think carefully about how they would make the order visible to people who didn't know it. Some children drew the pictures from left to right, explaining that this is the way to read. Other children put an arrow between the egg, caterpillar, pupa, and butterfly. Still other children put numbers in connection with every stage. One child put the pictures on top of each other, and a few could not remember all the stages or understand what a sequence was.

Afterwards they put the drawings on the wall and talked about their different ways of thinking about how order could be illustrated.

Another example was made, when a couple of children asked how many people lived in their own house. For children living in their own family house this wasn't a problem. But for children living in apartment buildings the question soon became complicated. However they tried to solve the problem with different strategies.

Gabriella (6 years) started to write down all the family members with a number. She then drew her house and counted every window (48). Gabriella: "I do not want

to write all the family members since we are so many, 10 people. I write 10 here. There are 11 floors in the house (she has drawn 12). I know 7 who live behind other doors. (She names all those people, except one who she has forgotten the name of).I think we are 16 on our floor".

Nanette comments on her drawing: "Me and my Mummy, that's two in one flat. Under us live four, three people and a dog, that's four. At our neighbours there are six, mother, father, a child, a grandmother and grandfather and a small rabbit. Guess who they are? (points at her picture). They live on the top floor. I don't know them. Next door lives little Jimmy with his mother and "pretend father". I think there are 13 on our stairway. I don't know how many there are in all of my house, it isn't countable!"

Marcus: "I think there are a thousand million people in all of my house. We are six in our flat. I have made a sign for every person, then I can count them. Next to us live two old people and next to them another old couple. Next to them are another 15 people, old and young. That makes 27 on the whole floor."

None come to a correct answer, and that's not the important part. But children make an effort and try to solve the problem in ways which can be discussed.

The man-made world

After having worked with different changes in society, a group of children were given a problem to solve which hadn't been discussed in the group earlier. The children were divided into small groups of 4 or 5. They each got two small pieces of cardboard and were asked whether they knew how people began to live together. "Where did they live?" Every child knew that people had lived in caves, as they built one in the basement earlier in the year . "And how do we live today?" was the following question from the teacher. The children were asked to use one card for the cave and one for the house they live in today. Then they were asked to think carefully about how people may have lived in the meantime, and to take as many cards as they wanted and draw people's houses.

An example of one child's suggestion is the cave, an igloo, a peghouse, a straw-house and a "normal" house. Another child drew the cave, a wooden hut, a cottage and a block of flats. Other children did other combinations. The next day they looked together at all the different ideas and the children had the opportunity of exploring their thinking about how people's accommodation had changed.

Another content in a group was "learning to find your way in the forest". The teacher walked into the forest with a small group of children where they found a nice place to play. Before they were supposed to return home, the teacher asked them how they would be able to find their way back to this nice spot another time. The three different perspectives explained by the children reflected different ways of thinking about this:

1) Trail-and-error method, e.g. "First one walks straight forward and then one tries to find the way back".
2) Repetition, e.g. "I have to walk this way over and over again, then I will learn the way in the end".
3) To observe and recognise specific things, for example: "I would try to remember what the trees looks like, count them, if we turn left or right etc."

Another day the teacher went to the forest with a new group of children and yet another day the whole group went together and they had to share their ideas about finding their way in the forest. One boy suggested making a map for finding the way. Everybody seemed interested in making maps, which they also did later on. But first the teacher brought all the different ways they had suggested for finding their way in the forest to their attention.

Reading and writing

Further to the subject of the map from the last paragraph, children were asked to make a map which their friends could follow to find their nice playground in the forest.

> A lot of children made maps from their own perspective (copied trees or other things they remembered).
> Other children were able to take a satellite perspective (draw the trees from above and make the path in between).
> A third perspective was to draw symbols and talk about the map as a message to someone else.

Children had to show each other their maps and talk about how the map could be used by their friends. The teacher's intention with this activity was to give children an opportunity to realise that writing (symbols) is a way of communicating of thinking.

Children who are used to this approach to learning sometimes make the comparison

Marc's letter to grandma.

by themselves. Here is an observation of four children drawing pictures and "writing".

Alexander (3 years): I can't write!
Mohammed (5 years): I can show you. (He writes in pretend writing on Alexander's picture). Now it says Alexander there!
Danka (4 years): (Starts to scribble). Look I have written that this is a bus on its way to Stockholm.
Alexander: But look at Christina, she writes in another way!
Christina (5 years): I write with letters, but it is okay to scribble or do pretend writing. There are many ways to write. But in school you have to learn the alphabet.

To get children to reflect on reading, the teacher one day asked the children: "What is a fairy tale?"

– Something to be read.
– Someone writes, and it becomes a fairy tale.
– It is an old story.
– My grandmother has a fairy tale she tells.
– The Bible is a fairy tale.
– Fairytale (in Swedish *saga*) sounds like *Sara* (little sister's name).
– It is when you read about princesses.
– If you don't have a book – you can watch fairy tales on TV.

The teacher: "Did you listen to all the different ideas you all came up with about what a fairy tale is?" And she repeats some of the ideas. She continues: "Why is it nice to be able to read?"
– To read in school.
– So that my father doesn't need to read for me.
– So I can read a message from my mother when she has gone to the dentist.
– Then I can read for my baby-brother.
– I can write a letter to my cousin in Copenhagen.
– I can enjoy books.

Once again children's ideas are explored and talked about. Children may often confuse reading and writing, but at least they get a chance to think, reflect and hear other children's ideas.

The natural world

A group of children were given the question: "What is nature?"
– Nature is at the museum in the city.
– Nature is a pet shop.
– I have seen nature on TV – What did you see then? – Elephants and giraffes, and so on.
– Nature is plants and trees.
Teacher: "Are the sea and rocks nature?" – No!
Teacher: "Are people nature?" – No!
The teacher suggested that they should write their different ideas in their notebooks, making sure that they write down each new idea. Children who could write wrote ideas down, other children drew symbols (animals, plants etc.).

A few children were asked to fold a piece of paper down the middle and use the left side to illustrate light and the right to illustrate darkness.

Mathias (6 years) made a house with windows, a chimney with smoke, the sun, seagulls, a smiling boy, a blue sky and green grass to illustrate light. Darkness was illustrated by the same house but without chimney and windows, a dark sky and no boy.

Lisa (6 years) illustrated light with a happy girl in the sunshine, while darkness was illustrated by the same girl, but sad and with a cloud in the sky. Other children illustrated it in other ways. From all these drawings the teacher had an excellent opportunity both to get children to express their ideas, but also to compare and try to bring what was similar in their drawings on light and darkness to the children's attention.

Another group walked into a meadow. Each child was given a paper-bag, and the task was to choose at least five different objects to take back to pre-school. Back at pre-school they got a new task: to categorise their objects into living or dead things. They then had to draw all the living things on one piece of paper and the dead ones on another. Children also had to tell each other which things were living or dead and why they thought so.

Two examples follow here: Stina (5 years): "The cup is living, since it isn't broken. Birch seed and mushrooms and moss and oakleaf and fern are living. I do not think any of it is old. It fades when it gets old. The string, the handle and the "fish plastic-thing", they can die, but I do not know how. These are made things."

All the drawings were put on the wall the next day, and by comparing them, the children realised that some objects were found both in the group of living and the group of dead things. A new discussion with new arguments opened up.

Pelle (6 years old): The willow-leaves are green. They are alive. The pine-cone is dead. It was alive when it grew on the tree. Acorns lived when they were green. The peg isn't alive, because pegs which are alive are on trees, but this one isn't. The rowan berries are alive. When they become wrinkled they are dead.

Learning

During a theme lesson, where a group of children worked with "growing new plants", a boy said one day: "Which one is largest, the earth or the sun?". "Well what do you think?" asked the teacher. Marcus said: "The earth, because there is air

there!" Isaura said: "The sun, because it can shine so far away". Zandra continued: "They are the same size, because the sun shines all over the earth". The teacher made them aware that the sun can't be both larger, smaller and the same size, and asked them how they would go about finding out about it. Isaura: "Call the radio. They ought to know, they have a spare rocket for finding out the weather". Stig: "Call TV. People there go up to the sky and examine the weather. They can look or one can go there oneself". Marcus: "I can ask Håkan. He goes up to space sometimes". Gabi: "I will think about it". Zandra: "Read it in a book. My mother can read it for me". Nanette: "I'll read it in a book too".

In the afternoon, when the children were picked up by their parents, the teacher talked with the parents and the children about what he or she was supposed to find out for the next day. The parent whose child wanted to call the radio seemed very embarrassed. So the teacher said to her: "If you find it difficult to call, you might find the telephone number and we can do it here tomorrow". This they did! When each of the seven children the next day had an answer, the teacher drew symbols of the sun and earth as equal, the sun largest and the earth largest. Every child had to give his answer and the teacher put a mark behind the symbol. After a while they realised that everybody now knew that the sun was the largest. The teacher then changed focus again to the learning aspect and asked them one by one how he or she found out. She finished this short session by bringing to the children's attention the fact that they had used many different strategies to arrive at their answers.

The teacher was here trying to make the children aware of their own learning by using a question from one of the children and creating a situation where every child had to think and reflect. They had to follow their ideas up in practice. And finally, once again, they came to see the variation of ways of finding out about something.

Another example is from a group who worked on worm-composting. One day the teacher asked the group of children: "How should we go about teaching someone else all we have learnt about worm-composting?

- We could *show* those who don't know.
- We could *tell* them and *explain*.
- We could *make* a worm-compost for them.
- We could *make a theatre* about worm-composting.
- We could make a *picture and write*.

The teacher: "Look how many different strategies you came up with for giving other children opportunities to learn the same as we have done."

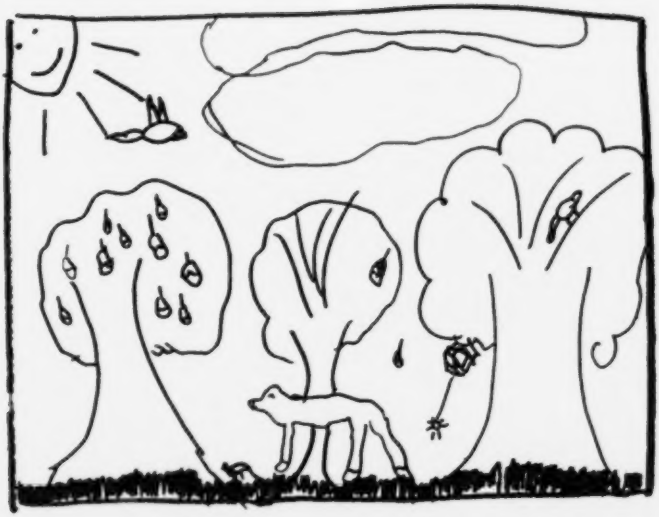
Discussion

I would like to emphasise that this approach to learning is not about developing children's knowledge and skills, but developing their awareness about different aspects of the world around them. The focus is on children's *learning how to learn*, which in this context means developing their capacity to think and reflect, and through that to become more aware of different phenomena in the world.

When a child works together with a peer in the solving of a problem at a level just beyond him, it is likely that the child will change his perspective towards the more advanced one (Kuhn, 1972). Researchers also begin to claim that working with a partner equal in skill, or even less advanced, may still yield progress (Slavin,1983). Light and Glachan (in Rogoff, 1990) found that peers who discussed each other's perspective were more likely to progress in their individual level of logic than those who did not discuss the problem or whose conversations focused on assertion of status, although the consideration of each other's perspective did not depend on the child's initial level. Barbara Rogoff (op. cit.) argues that children's argumentation helps them to diversify their understanding.

Here, the use of children's ideas as content is specifically pointed out as an aspect of the experience oriented approach. Many researchers have emphasised the importance of the child verbalising his actions (Broström, 1989; Klein, 1989; Weikart, 1989). But what I claim is that *the variety of ideas put forward has an effect as such on learning* (see also Marton, 1981, 1988). The child becomes aware of his own way of thinking about different phenomena by understanding the point of view of others.

One of the problems for teachers beginning to work on this approach to learning is that they recognise it and feel at home with it, since it builds on the theme-oriented pre-school tradition. But the breakthrough consists in the view on knowledge. Some teachers ask at the beginning: "But what if no one comes up with a right answer?" And I have to answer every time: "It doesn't matter, since it is the flow of ideas that is important". The interesting thing is that although the teacher's task is to explore children's ideas, the children acquire a lot of skills and gain a lot of knowledge. Gustafsson and Mellgren (1991) worked systematically with this approach on the aspect of writing for 9 weeks with two groups of pre-school children. When this work was evaluated and compared with two other groups, these children's conceptions of the use of writing and how to go about learning etc. not only showed greater awareness, but their knowledge of the alphabet and their ability to read words and sentences were also much higher. 8% of children in the comparison group could read, compared to 50% in the experimental group.



DER VAR ENGANG EN RÆV. DEN LØB EFTER EN MUS. HAN KUNNE IKKE NÅ AT FANGE MUSEN FØR DEN KLATREDE OP I ET TRÆ UDE I SKOVEN. SÅ KOM DER EN EDDERKOP OG STAK RÆVEN I NUMSEN. DER KOM EN FUGL I FLYVENDE OPPE I LUFTEN. DEN KOM LIGE FORBI SKYERNE.

CASPER.

There was once a fox, it ran after a mouse. It could not catch the mouse, because it crawled up in a tree in the forest. Then there came a spider and pinched the fox in the behind. A bird came flying in the air, just past the skies. Casper.

This approach has also been used for the development of children's awareness of artwork in pre-school (Gustavsson, 1992). Children's awareness changed to a large extent from artwork in terms of what there is in the picture to the meaning of the picture. At first the children had no idea of why pictures were painted, but they talked about "other people's joy" after the work. Another change in children's thinking was towards being able to take the perspective of the painter.

Working with children's "life-worlds", as expressed in their ideas, has a great impact on children's learning (Pramling, 1989; Pramling, 1991). The teacher's role is to focus on content which to a large extent is taken for granted. That is, to focus on the invisible ground of knowledge and skills.

Children's ideas as content in pre-school could be developed in a dialogue between teacher and child. It could be used in small groups of 4 or 5 children, which possibly is the ideal number of children that can really give every child an opportunity to think and share his thoughts. But it can also be done with 15-20 children together. There are also a lot of ways to make children's ideas visible, for example, by verbalising, in drawings, in drama, in play, in construction work etc.

By utilising results from research and building on the genuine pre-school tradition, which differs significantly from the school tradition, we can develop an early childhood education programme which is both cognitively oriented and child centered: a programme which could be used systematically to develop children's learning. And it should be a programme which takes into consideration the wealth of meaning which children are able to express if we just give them a chance.

Conclusion

Robert Fulghum, the American poet who wrote the book: "All I really need to know I learned at kindergarten" has formulated so well how the child needs balance in his life, to learn something every day, to think every day, to draw and paint and run and dance and play and work every day. All these and many more aspects are important to recognise in early childhood education programmes. However, I have chosen to focus on the child's cognitive development and learning since I believe we influence these from the child's first day in an early childhood programme.The child's social and emotional conditions are also visible in the child's way of experiencing. When we work with children we do not only work with the child's cognitive, social or emotional development, we work with the whole child - and it is all there all the time.

- Within early childhood education we need teachers who work towards children's understanding of different phenomena as a goal.
- We need teachers who make efforts to understand the child's world.
- We need an environment which offers the child challenges.
- We need an environment where the child can be active both in acting and thinking.
- We need an environment which emphasises the child's pleasure in playing.
- We need an environment where the child has the greatest possible initiative and control.
- We need an environment where the child's self-confidence and identity are acknowledged.

By working on children's ideas in this way, we shall achieve the same creative approach to learning as we have today, i.e. to play without extrinsic achievement demands. At the same time we shall be guiding children systematically towards an awareness of different phenomena in their surrounding world. I would claim that we get a pedagogy which integrates education and care and which influences children's conceptions of their own learning as an active process within themselves, a view which unfortunately not all adults share today.

Bronfenbrenner, who has one if the most interesting approaches to children's development and learning, says that learning is so complicated that we will never be able to keep all the variables under control or ever be able to explain it fully. I think he is right, but perhaps we do not even need to explain all the factors involved. My suggestion is to look at and listen to the child, his experience of society, culture, the family, etc. It is all there, expressed in the child's way of thinking and acting.

As adults, our own view, of children's development and learning will, of course, influence children's views. They have to get experience that corresponds with what we believe is the best for them. We need to have long-term goals. How do we want children to be as adults? If we want a change in the early childhood education system, we must work for it now – tomorrow we have already lost a generation.

Early childhood education of high quality must be recognised all over Europe as an equally obvious right for every child as the school is today. Children's learning and development ought to be of concern to everybody in society – not only in relation to women's participation on the labour-market.

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Do Early Childhood Services Need a Coherent and Comprehensive Approach?

Peter Moss

Peter Moss has a high priority on the organising committee's list of speakers. Peter Moss is the person who, through the EEC child care network, and in spite of all difficulties, keeps on saying that young children have the right to education and care and have the right to a coherent and comprehensive day care of high quality. No one has a better overview of the EEC countries' policy towards young children's education and care.

Professor Peter Moss, born in the United Kingdom in 1945, acquired a Bachelor of Arts in History, a Bachelor of Philosophy in Applied Social Science and a Master of Arts in Social and Economic History. As Senior Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit of the Institute of Education of London University, Peter Moss has implemented his interest in early childhood, care and education services and the relationship between employment and family life by directing projects on early childhood services, dual earner households, transition to parenthood and young mothers. Peter Moss is Coordinator of the European Commission Network.

I want to begin by making some apologies. First, I should apologise for a major limitation in my presentation today. I shall concentrate on services for children below compulsory school age. However, I recognise that this is too narrow, both in terms of the Conference programme, which is concerned with children from 0-10, and in terms of how we should be thinking about the relationship between care and education. For the relationship between care and education is as important once children start at primary school, as before; while the relationship between early childhood services and services for children of primary school age raises equally important issues. Second, I should apologise for the title of my contribution. I am not good at titles, and this one is no exception. It is too vague and rhetorical. To ask whether early childhood services need a coherent and comprehensive approach is

like asking - do we want to live in a free and just society? The answer to the question in my title, especially from the audience at such a conference, is probably 'yes'. But neither the question nor the answer take us much further forward. We need to define our terms, in my case what I mean by 'coherent' and '-comprehensive', or indeed 'early childhood services'.

In the course of my presentation I will try to explain what I mean by these terms and why I think comprehensive and coherent early childhood services are so important. But first, a little personal history. This may help to explain why I believe that this Conference is dealing with a subject of fundamental importance and also why I chose the title for my presentation.

Visions

I need to go back 20 years, to when I joined the Thomas Coram Research Unit. I went to work for one of the most eminent social researchers of post-war years - Professor Jack Tizard, the Research Unit's founder and first Director. Jack Tizard was a man of great vision. This vision had led him already to question why children with severe mental handicaps had to live in large special hospitals. In a famous experiment, he showed that they did not need to live in such hospitals - indeed, that they progressed far better if they were allowed to live in the same conditions as non-handicapped children.

He then turned his attention, at the beginning of the 1970s, to early childhood services. Again, he had a clear vision of how services should be for young children and their parents. They should be local and easily accessible, within pram pushing distance (I should add that he lived and worked in London, and that though easy access is equally important in rural areas, pram pushing distance may be a less appropriate concept). Services should be free of charge at the time of use; *accessibility, affordability and sufficient places* should ensure that early childhood services were available to all children and parents.

What sort of services should there be? Certainly, they should offer *care and education* for all children; he appreciated that care and education are inseparable for young children. But they should also be *flexible*, to be able to respond to the needs of all local families. Parents should be able to decide at what age their children started to attend and the hours their children attended. In addition to care and education, there should be a range of other health, social and recreational services for children and their carers. The range of possible services was considerable: health

clinics, launderettes, toy and book libraries, groups for parents and children and so on. The actual mix of services would depend on what was needed locally.

Jack Tizard's vision, back in the early 1970s, was of an early childhood service that was comprehensive. Comprehensive in the sense that it was available to all families with children under compulsory school age and that all families would have equal access, irrespective of income or circumstances. Comprehensive in the sense that the service was flexible and multi-functional, providing for a wide range of educational and social needs of children, parents and other individual carers of young children. If care and education were at the heart of early childhood services, they were not the only functions that could be served by such services. But at the same time as being comprehensive, diverse and multi-functional, the service would also be coherent, applying certain consistent principles in the way it operated.

Jack Tizard's vision and commitment played a major part in the establishment of two 'childrens centres' in London, where many of his ideas were put into practice. The tragedy for the United Kingdom was the failure by successive Governments to build on these and similar innovative examples; the opportunity to develop a comprehensive, multi-functional and coherent **system** of early childhood services was never taken.

Realities

The problems that Jack Tizard addressed and tried to resolve are not unique to the United Kingdom. In no country are services comprehensive. This is partly a problem of inflexibility and narrowness of approach, which prevents services from being multi-functional and meeting the full range of needs of children and their families. I shall return to this point.

More basically, there is a continuing shortage of publicly funded services, especially for children under 3 and to provide for children outside school hours. In most countries of the European Community, such provision is available to 5% or less of children. Even in Denmark, which has the highest level of publicly funded services for children under 3 in Europe, with places for just under half of this age group, there is a waiting list of 30,000 children.

I mention and emphasise *publicly funded* provision because it is only through active public involvement that all families can be guaranteed access to good services. By active public involvement I do not mean that services have to be delivered and man-

aged by public authorities. Denmark, for instance, has a mix of publicly funded provision, with about 60% managed by communes and the rest by non-profit private organisations.

By public involvement, I mean government leadership in policy development and service planning, and the provision of public resources to implement policy and planning. However we define quality in early childhood services, the conditions necessary to ensure quality will make services relatively expensive; good care and education is not cheap.

Without public resourcing, there is no way that all children can enjoy equal access to good quality services, and no way that workers can receive appropriate pay and conditions. Without adequate public funding, access or quality or both are bound to be compromised.

I am not arguing that public funding guarantees good services. I am arguing, however, that though it is not a sufficient condition, it is a necessary condition for the development of a comprehensive service, that offers equal access to good services for all children and parents. Coming from the United Kingdom, where 60% of all

I go to the library with my borrower's ticket. The books stand in rows.

places in early childhood services are *not* publicly funded, in other words where most places depend on parents' paying fees, and where this proportion is actually growing year by year. I hope you will excuse me if I go on at such length on this point, which may seem self-evident to many of you. My other excuse for doing so is that public funding of early childhood services may be threatened in other countries, either from ideological arguments, which stress that these services should be the private responsibility of parents, or from pressure on public expenditure.

The problem of early childhood services not being comprehensive continues. So too does the problem that these services are, in most countries, fragmented and lacking in coherence. This occurs at several levels. There is the conceptual level. In the United Kingdom, for example, it is common to compartmentalise the way services are thought about and discussed: we have 'childcare for working parents', 'daycare for children in need', 'support services for parents or families' and 'nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds'. This fragmented way of thinking emphasises *one* particular function for *one* particular group of children, and encourages different groups of children and parents to be treated in isolation from each other.

Conceptual fragmentation is commonly reinforced by fragmented responsibility for services. With a few exceptions, public responsibility for early childhood services in the European Community is divided between two (or occasionally more) departments - typically health or social welfare on the one hand, and education on the other. Generally, education authorities assume responsibility for children from about the age of 3 or 4, offering nursery education or early admission to primary school. Health or social welfare authorities may only have responsibility unto that age, though in some cases they retain responsibility for some children until compulsory school age. This leads to overlapping responsibilities for the same age group, for example for 2 year olds in France and Belgium and for children between 3 and compulsory school age in United Kingdom, Portugal, Greece and Ireland.

This division of responsibility contributes to a serious lack of coherence between early childhood services in most countries. By lack of coherence I mean inequalities and inconsistencies between different services in practice, organisation and function. To take the most obvious example, compare publicly funded services for children under 3 and nursery education services for children over 3. These services are likely to be the responsibility of different government departments, and may also be administered at different levels of government. They are funded differently, and the costs to parents differ. Staff receive different levels of training, pay and conditions, those working with the youngest age group doing worse. Nursery schooling will be more widely available than services for children under 3, but the hours of opening

will be shorter. Standards will vary. Finally, the services will tend to emphasise different objectives - care for children under 3, education for children over 3.

In some respects and in some countries, the fragmentation and lack of coherence is getting worse. In every country of the European Community, the number of employed mothers is steadily increasing; in the European Community as a whole, between 1985 and 1990 the employment rate for women with children under 10 increased from 40% to 47%, a rapid rate of growth. In some countries, the response to this development has been superficial. Attention has focused on *maternal* employment, rather than the broader issue of *parental* employment; ways have been sought to enable mothers to combine work and family responsibilities, rather than looking more broadly at how men might take a more equal share of family responsibilities and at how employment might develop to recognise that all workers have family responsibilities for much of their working lives.

More specifically, the cry has gone up for 'childcare for working mothers', rather than for development of early childhood services that can meet the need of children with working parents for secure care along with the other needs of these children and the needs of the many children who have a parent who is not employed. This narrow and superficial approach is exemplified by an increasing and uncritical interest in the concept of 'employer childcare', where individual employers offer support for services that provide care for the children of their work force. In this way, services for children become defined as an occupational benefit, rather than a universal right of citizenship. Their availability becomes dependent on the labour force needs of a particular employer or the bargaining power of parents and trade unions, rather than the needs of the child or her career.

This development of 'employer childcare' can be seen in many countries, but most strikingly in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The Government of the United Kingdom, faced by a rapid growth of employment among women with children, has stressed that the provision of care for children with working parents, is essentially a private matter, to be resolved by parents, with employer assistance where justified by the employer's labour force needs. Between 1990 and 1992, the number of workplace nurseries nearly doubled. In the Netherlands, a government programme uses public money, distributed via local authorities, to stimulate the development of services. The driving force behind the programme is provision of 'childcare for working mothers', and as the new funding meets only a proportion of service costs, the viability of new places depends heavily on employers buying places: indeed, it is expected that more than 70% of places will be sold to employers.

I am not arguing that early childhood services should ignore the care needs of children with employed parents; this is an important function of any comprehensive early childhood service. Nor am I arguing that employers have no interest in early childhood services; they are one of the groups whose needs should be taken into account when developing services. There may even be a case for saying that all employers should contribute towards the cost of services, through a general levy, as in France or Sweden - although the case is evenly balanced for and against.

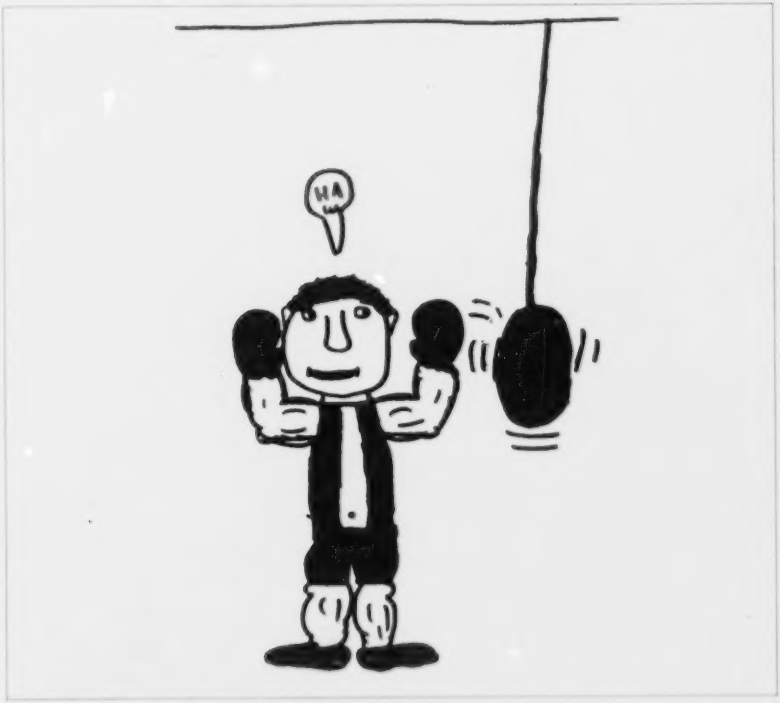
What I am arguing is that 'employer childcare' – involving individual employers', a narrow focus on the care needs of children with working parents and the treatment of services as an occupational benefit – is inimical to comprehensive, multi-functional and coherent early childhood services, to which all children have equal access. The increase in parental employment should provide a stimulus to review our concept of early childhood services. Instead, too often it is exacerbating existing problems, leading to services that are more narrow, more fragmented and more lacking in coherence.

There are alternatives to such narrow and superficial approaches. There are examples of countries or regions which have been working hard to develop a more comprehensive, coherent and profound approach to early childhood services. Let me mention four, although I do not claim this is a comprehensive review.

A Comprehensive and Coherent Approach

Denmark is perhaps the country in Europe which has gone furthest in developing a comprehensive and coherent system of early childhood care and education services. Publicly funded early childhood services are widely available, although as already noted, still not sufficient to meet demand especially for children under 3. All services for children under school age are the responsibility of one department, both nationally and locally - social affairs. All services have a care function, a necessity in a society where virtually all parents are in the labour market: but all services also have a pedagogical function. Hours of opening are similar for services for children under and over 3. Workers in services have the same levels of training, pay and conditions. There is considerable diversity in terms of types of services offered, and the management of services, but consistency across services in key areas. The end result is a system of early childhood care and education that is coherent, with a few exceptions, for example the fact that parents with children under 3 pay more for services than parents with older children.

My second example comes from Northern Italy. In many areas, the last 20 years have seen extensive development in the quantity of publicly funded services for children under 3. But there have also been important qualitative developments. After a law in 1971 passed responsibility for nurseries for children under 3 to regional and local government, the emphasis was placed initially on the development of services providing care for children with working parents. Subsequent review led to a more educational emphasis being introduced, so that nurseries have evolved an approach that combines care and education. Most recently, further developments have occurred in which new and more diverse services have begun to evolve, providing a range of social and educational functions for all young children, not only those with employed parents. These developments in parts of Northern Italy show a gradual evolution towards a genuinely comprehensive, multi-functional service to all families with very young children.



Aske: strong and weak.

Spain provides my third example. A major reform of the education system in 1990 makes education authorities responsible for all services for children from 0-6, and this age group is recognised as the first stage of the education system. Teacher training now offers the option of training to work with children from 0-6. The reform is recent, and implementation has so far been limited, especially for children under 3. However, it provides a framework which offers the opportunity to develop a coherent system of care and education services for children from 0-6.

My final example is a country which has also developed a framework which holds out the possibility of comprehensive and coherent early childhood services. As part of a major educational reform covering the full range of services unto and including universities, New Zealand embarked in 1989 on an overhaul of its services for children under compulsory school age. Over the years, a wide variety of early childhood services have developed in New Zealand; by the late 1980s, there were more than 20 different types of service. While wishing to retain this diversity, the New Zealand reform provided a coherent and comprehensive framework for future development. This framework includes the transfer of responsibility for all early childhood services to the Ministry of Education, the acceptance of the basic principle that care and education are inseparable and the development of a common qualification for all workers in early years services.

Equality of funding between different types of early childhood care and education services was one of the basic principles underlying the reform process. As I have just mentioned, New Zealand has a range of diverse services for young children and their families. Prior to 1989, these services were funded in different ways and at different levels. An aim of the reforms was to implement a common formula for public funding across all care and education services, based on bringing funding for all services unto the level of the best funded service, with additional grants for children under 3 or with special needs, to take account of their additional staffing and other requirements. It was intended that equality of funding between different types of services would be achieved over 5 years (1989 to 1994), and during the first year (1989-90), there was a 65% increase in funding.

The rate of future growth has subsequently been put into question by a change of Government: "the new government has already frozen the phased increases to early childhood funding and is currently holding a review of early childhood funding". However, the work already done in New Zealand shows the possibility of applying certain uniform principles, including a common funding formula, across a wide variety of services (covering both different types of service and different types of provider), to establish a coherent policy framework for early childhood services while at the same time maintaining and supporting diversity of provision.

Looking ahead

I want to conclude by looking ahead. I have argued the case for a coherent and comprehensive approach to early childhood services. But if this approach is to be achieved, then the experience of the countries I have just mentioned suggests that certain conditions are necessary:

> *breath of vision* and recognition of the importance to individual and societal wellbeing of *adopting a holistic approach;*
> *political commitment*, expressed in terms of policy and resources for implementation;
> the adoption of a *common framework*, to encompass all services and ensure consistency in certain key areas; and
> *new terminology* to express the concept of a system of services that is coherent and comprehensive.

Breadth of vision is needed, based on a recognition of the contribution that early childhood services can make to meeting a variety of needs - social, educational, cultural, economic - for a variety of groups. This broad vision pervades one of the most inspiring official reports ever produced on early childhood services - *Education to be More*, the report written in 1988 by the New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group. In a chapter entitled, *the Benefits of Early Childhood Care and Education*, the Working Group outline how early childhood services can benefit a variety of groups, starting with *children*.

> "Good quality early childhood care and education sets the right foundation for children's future personal and educational development. Children acquire more knowledge and skills, develop a stronger sense of their personal and cultural identity and learn how to get along with others".

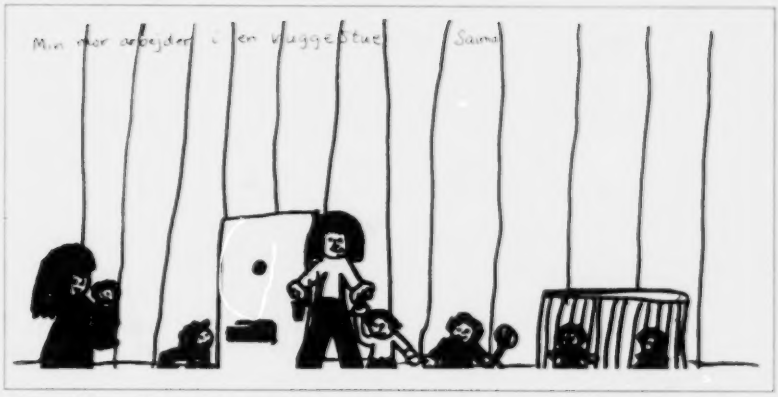
Services also benefit *women*. "They get the choice to join the labour force or to control their lives in other ways... they have time out from child-rearing... services contribute to the formation of social networks". *Families* gain from improved income where services are used to provide care while parents are at work as well as to promote children's education; through better relationships between family members; and from the development of community networks for families. *Employers* benefit from continuity of work from employees and regular work attendance by parents with children. *Communities* and *society in general* gain through improvements to the social fabric, the creation of networks that help bind communities together, through the preservation and passing on of culture and so on.

Underlying this concept of meeting multiple needs for multiple groups, there is a recognition that the well-being and healthy development of children requires a holistic approach to the child, just as a healthy society requires a holistic approach to services which recognises the equal importance of social, cultural and economic objectives.

Broad vision needs to be matched by a second condition - a *political commitment* to ensuring equal access to good early childhood care and education services for all children and parents. Ultimately, access to *comprehensive and coherent* services has to be based on a recognition that access is a right of citizenship for children and parents. It is incompatible with regarding access to services as an occupational benefit or as an act of private consumption or as dependent on a diagnosis of individual or family deficiency. For all these approaches lead down the road to fragmented and incoherent services. To make access to services a right of citizenship requires that political commitment is expressed in a clear policy, backed by the allocation of adequate resources to implement that policy.

At first sight, this may not seem a good time to argue this case for strong public involvement, including substantial public expenditure. I would argue that it is a very good time. Never before have there been so few children in developed countries: both in terms of the rights of children as citizens, but also in terms of the adults they will become, it is vital to ensure that children receive a proper share of national resources. As mothers join fathers in the labour force, all societies need to address the issue of how the costs of care and upbringing, for so long subsidised by women, should be allocated on an equitable basis. It is also time that societies began to apply proper cost-benefit approaches to early childhood services. A number of partial cost-benefit studies have been undertaken in the United States and United Kingdom - for example, of the social and educational effects on disadvantaged children, and of the effects on public expenditure due to more women in the labour force and less poverty amongst families. These limited studies have all shown the benefits of public support for services outweighing the costs. What we now need is work that puts together the full range of benefits and compares them to the *full* range of costs.

Vision and commitment can lead to policy and resources to develop services. The third condition for comprehensive and coherent service development is the creation of a *common framework*, encompassing all early childhood services, that ensures consistency and equality across a number of *key areas*. What are these key areas? I would suggest five.



Saima: My mother works in a day nursery.

First, *administrative coherence*, with responsibility for all early childhood services placed with one department at all levels of government, with that department responsible for developing and implementing an integrated and coherent early childhood policy.

Second, there needs to be a common *approach to access*. This means ensuring that all services are equally available, for children under and over 3 and their carers and in both urban and rural areas; that all services apply a coherent policy on cost to parents of using services, based on affordability; and that all services recognise, value and respond appropriately to diversity among children and families. This last point means, for example, adopting policies and practices for the integration of children with special needs and to ensure non-racist services.

Third, and closely related to the issue of costs to parents, there should be a coherent approach to the *funding of all early childhood services*, which means that a common funding formula is applied, as proposed in New Zealand.

Fourth, there should be a coherent approach to staffing issues, in particular training, pay and conditions. One of the conclusions of a European seminar on workers in early childhood services, organised by the European Commission's Childcare Network in 1990, was that initial training should be at least 3 years and at the same level as school teachers - although it was also recognised that it was essential to provide access to this training for students with good potential but who might lack normal academic qualifications. Initial training should be followed by a strong

system of continuous training, while pay and conditions should be at least the same as workers with similar levels of training.

What is clear, both from the seminar conclusions and the national examples, is that developing a coherent approach to staff training and conditions leads in particular to radical improvement in the position of workers with children under 3; and that the development of comprehensive and coherent systems always involves a recognition of the central importance of workers in services, and the need for high standards of training and improved pay and conditions.

Fifth, there should be coherence in terms of certain *common standards* applied to all services. What areas should be covered, and what the standards should be, would be open to discussion, as part of a wider debate on quality and the conditions needed to assure it.

I have proposed coherence or consistency in these five areas because they are essential to prevent inequalities and to ensure all children and parents have access to good services. But while emphasising the importance of coherence in key areas, I also want to emphasise that this does not mean uniformity and lack of diversity. A coherent service system can also be diverse, in terms of types of provision and types of providers, as Denmark and New Zealand illustrate. It is also possible to have services that are diverse in terms of their objectives and methods, reflecting differences in values and philosophy that are an inevitable and positive feature of plural societies. A core of common standards can be combined with diversity outside that common core. And the extent and content of that common core can also vary between societies. In Denmark, for example, national government imposes a minimum of common standards, leaving considerable autonomy to communes and to individual services; this is made possible in part because of the high standard of training of workers.

Finally, we need *a new terminology* to express the concept of a system of services that is coherent and comprehensive. Here, the English language has proven inadequate, although part of the problem may be that the larger English-speaking countries have not so far tackled the basic problem of reforming their services to offer a coherent and comprehensive approach. The term "educare" has been used, but apart from being rather clumsy, it also fails to encompass the full range of functions that early childhood services can provide for parents and other carers, as well as children. The New Zealand term "early childhood care and education services" suffers from the same problem, even if it is not quite so ugly. Drawing on the terminology from Northern Italy, perhaps the best term I can suggest at present is "early childhood social and educational services".

The recommendation on childcare

I want to conclude by a specific reference to developments within the European Community. This Conference is particularly well-timed because it comes soon after the adoption, by the Council of Ministers, of a "Recommendation on Childcare". This Recommendation forms part of the Action Programme to implement the Community's Social Charter and part of the Community's Third Equal Opportunity Action Programme. The objective of the Recommendation is the reconciliation of employment and "responsibilities arising from the care of children". To achieve this objective, the Recommendation proposes the need for a broad approach covering: the provision of services providing care for children; leave arrangements for parents; changes in workplaces to make them responsive to the needs of parents; and measures to support increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children.

In the context of this Conference, I would draw your attention to two points concerning the Recommendation. First, in its consideration of services for children, it is restricted to children with parents who are employed or training, or seeking employment. This reflects the European Community's legal competence and the areas in which it can take major initiatives. The European Community has competence to take major initiatives to promote equality of opportunity between men and women in the labour market, but it does not have legal competence to take major initiatives to promote the well-being and position of children or families. This inevitably limits its ability to develop a comprehensive approach to early childhood services.

On the other hand, the Recommendation does outline a number of important general principles for services for children with employed parents, in particular that they should "combine reliable care with a pedagogical approach". In other words, it implies the need, at least for children with employed parents, for services that combine care and education. The Recommendation also calls for "flexibility and diversity" of services and for "coherence between services".

I raise the Recommendation for three reasons. *First*, although not legally enforceable like a Directive, a Council of Ministers Recommendation has political weight because it has been agreed by all Governments. The Recommendation on Childcare provides a good opportunity for services and policies to be reviewed, at all levels, and in particular to see how existing services measure up to the objectives and principles contained in the Recommendation, for example that services should be affordable, combine care and education, diverse, flexible and coherent. Hopefully,

Governments themselves will take the initiative to make this review. But if not, then others may wish to suggest the need for such a review.

Second, I mention the Recommendation in the hope that this will encourage concerned organisations and individuals, who have not already done so, to read the final text adopted by the Council, and then go on to look at other Community documents concerning services for children and the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities – for example documents prepared by the Commission, the Parliament and Commission Networks such as the Childcare Network. I suspect that very few organisations and individuals knew about the Recommendation on Childcare, and that even fewer took any steps to attempt to influence the final content of the Recommendation, working through democratic channels to bring their views to bear on the Commission, the European Parliament or national Governments. I believe that it is important to develop a broad and well-informed constituency of organisations and individuals concerned with services for children and work-family issues, who are able to bring effective influence to bear on Community initiatives in these areas.

Finally, the need for such a constituency is important because the Community has a continuing and evolving involvement in this area. Work is underway to build on the Recommendation. The Commission, for example, will produce next year a Guide to Good Practice concerning the reconciliation of employment, caring for children and gender equality, including a substantial section on services for children. To complement this, the Childcare Network will be producing a range of material illustrating examples of good practice in services and service systems, as well as reports on a range of specific issues.

Further ahead, the Recommendation has to be reviewed after three years, in 1995: Member States have to inform the Commission of what they have done to implement the Recommendation and the Commission has to prepare a report. This provides an important opportunity, not only to discuss the situation in each Member State and in the Community overall, but to discuss the case for further initiatives at Community level, for example, the desirability of and feasibility of a Directive on Childcare, as proposed by the European Parliament.

It is also important to give more attention to the place of children in the Community. For example, a recent report from the European Parliament, on "The Problems of Children in the European Community" calls for "the creation of a legal basis in the European treaties to enable a Community policy on children to be formulated, respecting the principle of subsidiarity". Such proposals need to be the subject of

widespread and informed debate, since they raise important questions about the nature and role of the Community.

I raise these points not in the spirit of advocacy, but because I believe very strongly that there needs to be greater understanding and wider debate about these issues at a Community level. There also needs to be greater understanding and wider debate about the role that the Community might play in the development of services for children. Of course, services for children will continue to depend very largely on decisions made at national, regional and local levels. But I believe that an important and positive contribution can be made at a Community level. The European Community can promote the development of better services, not through the imposition of some common system of provision in all countries, which is neither desirable or necessary, but through increasing harmonisation of objectives and principles, the exchange of good practice and relevant experience and collaboration in tackling common problems.

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Children's Living Conditions
Secular Changes and Childhood Mythology

Dion Sommer

To ask Dion Sommer from the University of Århus to be one of the keynote speakers has been very important for the organising committee, because Dion Sommer is able to reveal research results to us that turn our myths about "childhood as either bad or innocent" wonderfully upside down. Dion Sommer's research gives us a very realistic platform from which to work with early childhood education.

Cand. Psych. Ph.D. Dion Sommer, born in 1948 in Denmark, Assistant Professor at the University of Århus. Research conducted in Denmark and USA includes subjects on living conditions in Scandinavia, family formation in Denmark and USA, peer relations and the relationship between father and child.Present research includes new socialisation patterns in a rapidly changing society, peer roles in the child's development and the child's acquisition of culture. Dion Sommer is a member of the International Child Care Policies and Programmes network.

This paper will reflect on the following: First, important aspects of the changing living conditions of children, presented in brief. Second, reflections in some depth will be made upon how such changes cause confusion in the cultural conceptions about the child's best interests. Some 'modern myths' about the child's life in contemporary society are presented and with the basis in recent research the myths will be critically discussed.

The Danish case as a 'natural experiment'

The reflections will have their basis in the Danish context, but such a perspective can be of importance for people from other European countries as well. So, why the Danish case?

The welfare debate being conducted today in the Nordic countries has gathered much attention in international societal circles. Sociologists, psychologists and practitioners have for example been wondering about the consequences of the social equalising and social welfare model, which are linked together in the so- called 'Scandinavian model'. In this context selected aspects will be presented, illuminating some of these consequences in relation to young children.

Denmark presents a very important social arena where consequences of modern conditions affecting the child's everyday life should be evaluated. Developments that have dramatically affected the lives of a new generation of children are of course being seen in other European countries, too. In this country however, changes - which will be commented on later - have been going on for more than 30 years now. In other words, as a result of this 'natural experiment', we have gained profound experience of the consequences on behalf of our children in this society. Although culture-specific, this experience might be interesting to reflect upon in those other European countries that are now facing many of the same alternations.

Changing living conditions.

To be a child in contemporary Denmark is not what it used to be. Merely during the last 30 years the conditions of a generation of children have been transformed in such way that one might speak about the emergence of a new type of childhood, a childhood that is substantially different from the one experienced by parents of today when they were children.

Throughout this century Denmark has undergone a change from being a country with an agriculturally based production to becoming an industrialised country. Especially after World War II, this process brought about a great upheaval in the living conditions of the population. This transformation process which has characterised the community is still progressing with unrelenting speed, and Denmark is well on its way to become a post-industrial information society.

According to Dencik, Langsted and Sommer (1989) the transformation into a highly technological industrialised country with its profound and rapid changes has had decisive consequences for people's living conditions, their lifestyles and ways of living together. The socialisation of young children has been markedly affected, too, through this process, which has changed norms and social beliefs among parents, welfare experts and politicians.

Institutionalisation has become a distinctive feature of modern childhood, and through the last quarter of this century and for many years to come, young Danish

children have spent and will spend a considerable amount of time within the sphere of public socialisation. As a consequence, childhood is now formed by two major divergent norm systems and upbringing practices: on the one hand, by the norms and traditions of the family, and on the other hand by the norms and upbringing practices of the professional educators.

So contemporary childhood is constructed in a different fashion from previously. In this process a complex web of influencing forces are involved. But adults play a decisive mediating role in this process, and one might argue that childhood is created not by children, but for children. It is the adult who, more or less consciously, controls, shapes, plans, and regulates the framework of the life that becomes our children's. One particular set of factors of great importance for the transformation of young children's daily life has been the set of societal changes that especially intervene in and affect the dispositions and choices of the parents. So, as will be documented later, a closer look at the relations existing between society and parents with young children is therefore of vital importance.

Despite the fact that young children are independent, active human beings who to a great extent are capable of causing changes within their own immediate environment, they have to act within the frameworks of time and the social and physical space which the adults, acting as structuring agents, construct for them. Basically, it is not little Anna who determines whether she wants to spend a considerable amount of her daily life in external care, but Daddy's and Mummy's working hours and the temporal rules that regulate their work. Additionally, Danish society has, through the development of a nation- wide system of family-extern caring programmes, decided to take care of Anna and her fellow friends when their parents are absent. This has become of growing and crucial importance for both the present and future development of a new generation of children. In other words, there is a close connection between young children's changed socialisation pattern and pertinent aspects of the material and ideological functioning of modern society.

Changed conceptions.

This changed situation has (in Denmark especially over the last 30 years) had the consequence that traditional theories and conceptions of socialisation have not constituted an adequate explanation of the changed patterns of socialisation of the young child. In the classical concepts of primary and secondary socialisation there are a number of assumptions which are hardly valid in contemporary social reality. For example, that the primary and most fundamental part of socialisation within the ages 0-6 years takes place exclusively within the context of the family, and that the child does not go through the secondary socialisation process until school age,

where it is supposed to be confronted with professional educators and more direct societal demands. The majority of young Danish children live their daily lives quite differently, which in turn must demand a reorientation in theoretical assumptions about the socialisation process. Today, a great number of Danish children spend many hours daily in another socialisation sphere than the family. It is interesting that this is the case to an even higher degree, the younger the child. Denmark is one of the countries in the world that has the highest percentage of children between 0 - 6 years of age enrolled in day care (Langsted and Sommer, 1992).

I watch TV

So it is obvious that a generation of young children is confronted with a socialisation pattern different from that of their own parents when they were kids. In order to grasp this new context of conditions for societal integration and development one might conceptualise this as a "dual-socialisation" situation. This implies that the child acquires important and often qualitatively different social knowledge from the dual contexts of family and day care.

The daily life of young Danish children is to an increasing extent characterised by experiences and actions that are contrasted and heterogeneously responded to in the two different socialising contexts of the family and day care. Norm systems, the number of interactional partners, as well as the logic of social interaction are markedly different in the two environments.

The modern child is in a situation where he or she has to transfer experience gained in one environment to the other and vice versa. What actually is experienced by the child in each of the dual settings only assumes meaning dependent on how the actual elements of experience are integrated in the total configuration of social knowledge of the child in the dual socialisation process. In other words, in order to grasp the new developmental consequences of this new dual complexity it is not sufficient just to add the varied influences and elements from each of the socialising contexts. We must acknowledge that through the metamorphosis of the psychological processes in the child, a new gestalt will be constructed as a result of the dual-socialisation situation.

As one of several important consequences of this new reality, we might expect new and strongly expanded demands on the development of social competence of the child. The actual daily life of small children is increasingly marked by what might be conceptualised as a "social horizon expansion", which implies the child's repeated encounters with many, often interchangeable, interaction partners, including both adults and other children. The small child must in response to this expanded social world develop competences and strategies in order to deal with this new complex socialisation pattern.

The child must learn very early that the adults in the family context cannot be expected to respond in the same way to the behaviour of the child as do the adults in the day care institution. Divergent and often confusing attitudes about upbringing occur in the everyday life of the child, and contribute to both complexity and expansion of the child's norm-integration process. This requires orientation towards development of skills that enable the child to cope with different and diverging demands and expectations, putting great adjustment demands on contemporary Danish children (Sommer, 1993a).

Against the background of the very high percentage of Danish children in public day care, it has, for example in the light of clinical experience, been expected that today's children generally should have become more restless, lack the ability to adjust and concentrate, and generally be more aggressive than earlier. But this has not been documented by research, and by merely negatively labelling an entire generation of typical children one has overlooked that it is rather the context in which the children are growing up that has changed. This is overlooked to such an extent that the explanatory power of many traditional conceptions and assumptions in relation to the development and socialisation of children might seem inadequate in today's reality. One might on the contrary highlight that it is surprising to observe how most children's plasticity has developed to a degree which transcends commonly held beliefs about what a child is capable of by nature.

The emergence of modern myths about children.

This change has in fact challenged belief systems about children and about what is seen as beneficial for their upbringing. Even what might be called the constitution of a modern mythology about children emerged, and there exist many generalised modern ideas about children and families which are myths in the sense that they are not valid, and out of touch with evidence based on investigation of the phenomenon. The ideas presented today are samples from the public debate conducted in the media in my country, from observations of numerous discussions about the conditions of modern children among people in general, and even from scientific literature. This paper will concentrate on the following four conceptions commonly held in our society.

The living conditions of the modern child are worse than in former times.
The belief in the dissolution of the modern family
The idea of the the time-pressed two wage earner family.
The conceptions about the fragile child and the ideal mother.

The mythodology of modern living conditions has - as the classical myth - the purpose of establishing order in chaos. Chaos arises, when traditional ways of thinking about existence are not sufficient any more, and there is no new belief system to grasp the meaning of the new situation of families and children in a changing society. What happens, for example, when the media all of a sudden become an important part of children's daily life? When the divorce rate is growing so rapidly that not few, but really many children are affected? When children are in day care for more hours per day than in the family? In such situations (and in many others) we are short of cultural norms and standards that tell us how to respond and how to think. It is in the ambivalent situation of modern life that the modern myth is created. The myth has a touch of obviousness and objectivity: "That's the way it is!", and at the same time it contains strong ideological perceptions about children and families. The sources dealing with the following diffusion of the myths stem from interdisciplinary research: existing statistics, social science, developmental psychology, history and the science of cultural history.

When in the following the focus is on children and their families, it must be acknowledged that focus is on typical children and their families. The myths are about their life and living conditions, although they are often rooted in the special and deviant case. But irrespective of the fact that in the Danish welfare state there still are groups of children and parents facing difficulties, it is important to understand the "typical and common" childhood - in our time and in our culture.

I go to nursery school early in the morning when the moon is in the sky.

The good old days and modern anxiety

In traditional viewpoints about the living conditions of modern children in the family and society, there is often hidden a myth of the past. In other words a point of view that takes it for granted that "in the old days it was better to be a child".

The myth of the past as a contrasting picture of present conditions

The present concern and critical perspective on the consequences of the dramatic changes for the child creates a search for a positive counter-example, and it is in this perspective that the myth of the past has to be understood. For modern man, alienated from nature, living in an urban reality – confronted by the inherent ambivalence of modern life – there arises the conception of bygone days with a life easy to grasp, with closer and warmer conditions for both children and adults.

It is important to realise that it is the nature of myths to be both inexact, generalised and obvious. The myth about the "good old days for children" is for example difficult to locate precisely in the historical dimension; but most of its assertions can be traced back to the time prior to the period of industrialisation and urbanisation. This

is not surprising as the myth about children's better life in the past has its main legitimation as a *contrasting picture of modern living conditions*. So, the myth of the past must seek legitimation in a preindustrial and pre-urban era.

Even if the myth as pointed out has to be both inexact and of sweeping generality, some of the most prevalent conceptions about childhood in the so called 'good old days' can easily be paraphrased:

- People's lives were essentially stable and meaningful (i.e. not changing as is the fact today).
- The child was seen as a necessity, incorporated in a stable working community.
- Living in solidarity in the close and binding village community.
- The child was incorporated in highly meaningful work within the close and binding solidarity in the village-community.
- Kinship contacts were close and frequent.

This perception of the past is, to put it bluntly, in marked contrast to the idea of the living conditions of the modern child. He or she is pictured as a prisoner of a split-up society, left out of any useful productive activity, growing up in the isolated, consumption-compensating nuclear family, emptied as it is for genuine feeling and community spirit.

The myth of the past modelling the idea of a 'genuine childhood' in the pre-industrial era consequently leads to the inevitable idea that modern children's living conditions - which indeed are quite different from previous ones - must be frowned upon and perceived as both disturbing and critical.

Researchers have labelled the myth of the past as an 'idyllization of the past' (Dencik, 1989) and it is in marked contrast with both historical documentation and the major conclusion in the works of Ariès (1962), Taylor (1989) and deMause (1974), who made intensive analyses on the living conditions of children and the family in the pre-industrial period in Europe. In contradiction of the romantic idea they draw a picture of poverty, cruelty, indifference and a lack of respect for the needs of the child. Shorter (1975) goes as far as characterising pre-industrial childhood as the "bad old days" for most children. The Danish cultural anthropologist Charlotte Bøgh (1988) gives the following description of children in Denmark in the 16th century. Many children had loving and caring parents (as they have today); but the everyday life of the child was filled with threats of early deaths; serious illnesses; early loss of parents. She tells the story of evil step- parents that misused children as a cheap and obedient workforce. She concludes that the picture of the good old days, where the family was stable and the members stayed together, is a tenacious

myth. Children were not separated from their parents because of divorce, which today is the most typical situation. But the duration of marriage was short due to death. In that era around half the children lost a mother, a father, or both.

The myth of reduced kinship relations

As hinted in the arguments about the myth of the past, it is conventionally taken for granted that kinship relations had greater importance earlier than is the case today. The claim is that the cultural transmission of values, and the feeling of belonging in earlier days had its fundamental base in the kinship relation; as a consequence children and adults had a close and enduring kinship network. In the modern welfare state, however, it is claimed that the State has taken over the main functions of kinship, and the network contacts are therefore markedly reduced. But is that fact or fiction?

The Swedish historian David Gaunt (1983) has investigated the history of family life in the North. He concludes that:

> "modern man has *more kinship-members alive, with more continuous contacts than ever before*. The reason that we have that many relatives is primarily attributed to the expanding length of life in combination with the decline of infant mortality. Old people today have nearly all their children alive. Children in Scandinavia have to a much higher degree their grand-parents alive than was the fact at the turn of the century " (p. 267).

Danish studies also suggest that children have extensive kinship contacts, most of all with grand-parents (Christoffersen, et. al., 1987). So there is not much substance in the claim that kinship-contacts should have diminished for the typical modern child - on the contrary.

However, my main point is not just to challenge the myth of the past as a misconception, out of touch with reality. Rather, the tenaciousness of this myth should be seen as a psychological reaction to the present ambivalent and fluid conditions of modern life.

The mythological drawing towards the original and natural

Behind the idyllization of the past lies a drawing towards 'naturalness' and a longing for the true essence in the relationship between environment and man, and between human beings. In close connection with this is the experience of loss as a condition for the contemporary child: the loss of a natural, healthy life; the loss of the possibility of growing up in a society which is in accordance with the 'original needs' of the child; the loss of a genuine relationship between people.

This faith in the original and natural human child is shared by many pedagogues and other experts, as well as people in common. However, to claim such an original, authentic relationship between man and the outside world is very problematic. It is very essential to acknowledge that in the epoch of the Middle Ages, in the Feudal era, in the Palaeolithic age, indeed, in every temporal epoch of history, the relationship between child, family and society consists of a *cultural acquisition:* the socialising agents of culture are at the same time developing and changing the 'original' needs of the child, and there is very little original, inner nature which just has to be modified by the outside world. The child, on the contrary, is a being with a spontaneous social plasticity, equipped with a surprising repertoire of possibilities for diverse ways of development. A child's original or basic needs are as a consequence impossible to distinguish from the cultural and historical context which the child is embedded in. When, for example, demands are made on the child to develop optimally, one should bear in mind that such demands concerning the child's perceived needs are more derived from secular and cultural customs than from some inner psychological or social need of the child. It might be tempting to believe that if you know the primary needs of the child, then - in principle - you can create the optimal 'child-friendly society' by adjusting society in accordance with such needs. Don't expect child or developmental research to solve that problem! There are no eternal truths about children, rather there are culturally appropriate ways of upbringing in time and place. Judy Dunn and Sandra Scarr put it this way: every epoch invents and reflects its own image of a child, and those images become an important part of the cultural ethos. (Scarr & Dunn, 1987)

But one common universal phenomenon beyond time and place is necessary for the proper development of the child, and that is the opportunity of growing up within the context of *human contact and communication.* The socialisation and upbringing of the child has to take place within a larger or smaller 'nucleus' of positive, stable human contacts during the phase of childhood. The family has been this nucleus in many societies and in many historical eras; but not in all cultures, in all societies, or in the same fashion.

Anxiety about modern childhood

As I have already mentioned, the idyllization of childhood in the past is intimately interwoven with the present anxiety about the living conditions of the contemporary child being worse than in previous times. This is a point of view that is widely held as a cultural belief in this country, and it is especially seen in the relatively new group of opinionmakers who are professionally engaged in the care of children, and who speak on behalf of the presumedly best interests of children.

But how is this anxiety about contemporary childhood to be understood? I will comment on three important explanations. First, that the worries on behalf of children's modern living conditions stem from a marked historical 'norm-increase' concerning the cultural expectations of what is perceived as being beneficial for the child. Secondly, I will comment on the consequences of the so-called humanisation of childhood. Thirdly, I will comment on what one might paraphrase as a 'normative crisis' as the inevitable consequence of life in a rapidly changing society. An overview is shown in the following:

- *Raised norm-expectations: Changing cultural beliefs about the child's needs and perceived best interests.*
- *Humanisation of childhood: Growing cultural respect for children as human beings, in need of special attention.*
- *Normative crisis: Cultural ambivalence in the perspective of the child and the evaluation of living and socialisation conditions.*

Gitte looks after me while I am sick.

The fact that more people might seem more worried than before does not necessarily mean that children's living conditions have in fact deteriorated - on the contrary, one might argue. The cultural standards of what the optimal living conditions are for children, and what they ideally are in need of have been rising markedly throughout this century. (Haavind, 1987) There is no doubt that the last hundred years, especially in the Nordic countries, have witnessed an extensive *humanisation*

of the child. Our 'distortion of the past' makes judgments about the here-and-now conditions of the child without perspective, and the proper understanding of present living conditions must acknowledge this historical humanising phenomenon. Seen in the historical perspective - and not in relation to absolute ideal-cravings on behalf of the child - the cultural respect for the child, i.e. that every child has certain needs and must be protected and cared for, is of higher priority today than previously. This profound rise in expectations and norms concerning the child is the tacit yardstick against which we estimate our efforts. The rising of norms in our culture have created the paradox, then, that we in fact are doing more for children; but instead we feel that we are doing too little and ought to do more.

Secondly: the perception of childhood, generally seen as a problematic phase of life, is rooted in the rapidly changing society's consequences for children and adults. This modern condition leads to a 'normative crisis' and an ambivalence in the cultural conceptions of the child. The reason is that well-established, but not out-dated belief systems of what a child is in need of are not able to grasp and conceptualise children's altered living conditions of today. In the absence of alternative explanations, earlier conceptions are transferred, as a cultural lag, to the new situation. The result is anxiety, concern and focus on experienced threats against the welfare of the child.

Children are the infancy-future. A growing anxiety about the future has created doubts about development as a positive phenomenon, and this profoundly affects our views about the growing generation and its future possibilities in a negative way. The repeal of a stable normative system is today the inevitable condition of modern socialisation. Instead of a stable cultural spiral-marrow reflex of experience, the state of change and 'norm-pluralism' is introduced as the modern condition of upbringing. Modern man's developmental continuity from infancy to old age is shaped in such a way that qualifications and competence acquired here-and-now will not necessarily lead to usable qualifications in a future life as an adult, living in another time. So children and adults are living with a fundamental ambivalence - a time of both challenges and anxiety. On the one hand we are put in a historical situation with new cultural possibilities for a diversive socialisation of children; but at the same time it should not be denied that we are living in a culturally diffuse and muddy situation. This creates perplexity, anxieties and chronic guilt feelings when it comes to the welfare of our children ("we are selfishly doing the wrong thing"; "we are doing too little together with our children") strongly supported by a sensitive and anxious consciousness about the child. In other words, a growing cultural sensitivity towards children which is a combined effect of the above mentioned humanisation, rise of normative standards and the state of cultural ambivalence.

The conception of the stunted child

It is on this background that the widespread modern conception of the stunted and malfunctional child has to be understood. Experts in this country have proclaimed a "new mental child-sickness" spreading through society (Lægeforeningens hygiejnekommitè, 1986); a deviant "new child-character"; a "fighter-relation" between modern children and their parents (Jørgensen & Schreiner, 1985); and a general tendency among children living in modern society to be aggressive, self-centred and without the ability to concentrate. Also others have claimed that there are more problem children than ever before. But this has never been confirmed by research, and explanations stating that new societal conditions (materialism; working mothers; time-pressure; exhausted parents; day-care socialisation; divorces; new types of families, and so on) create a massive number of children with problems are based on speculation and without any real empidemiological research on the well-being and mental status of children. In other words, we have a diffuse situation which is the perfect basis for creating the conception of the stunted child, with its flavour of objectivity and truism.

However, Madsen et. al. (1991) show, in a fairly new representative investigation on the physical and mental health of children in Denmark, that 80-90% are estimated as being well-off, and only relatively few have serious problems. 96% are in a healthy physical condition, and 80-85% have developed age-appropiately when starting school, and only 14% exhibit what is labelled 'problematic behaviour'. Developmental problems are seen more often among boys than among girls; among children with unemployed parents; where the mother is a housewife; among single mothers on welfare payments and among the children of immigrants. On the other hand the lowest rate of mental health problems is shown among children living with parents who both are working (be it full-time or part-time), which has been a particularly frowned-upon factor.

The myth of the dissolution of the modern family

Behind the myth of the stunted child often lies an argument that the modern family has changed in such a way that it does not attend to its fundamental socialising responsibilities. This proposition claims that modern living conditions have created a situation in which the family is falling apart. The separate daily life of the couple, engaged as they are in their extensive work-commitment and desire for "self-realization" as adults, is said to contribute to the dissolution of the family. It is claimed, for example, with roots in functionalistic family-theories, that the modern family has been deflated of important functions that earlier were taken care of by the fam-

ily: reproduction, socialisation and intimacy. In the aftermath of the disintegrated nuclear-family there is in fact a growing number of new family and cohabitation forms, and this, according to the dissolution-myth, is said to produce threatened and rootless children. Especially the Danish family has undergone considerable change during the last 30 years, and the dissolution argument is most often about the traditional 'natural' nuclear type of family consisting of mother, father, and children. These worries concern the upbringing of children in the new types of families: the single parent, the step-parent, shared children and so on. Let's have a closer look at some of the myths.

The 'divorce myth'

Worried about the increasing divorce-rate in this country, the Danish Social Committee Association (Sammenslutningen af Sociale Udvalg, 1985), estimated some years ago that it was realistic for only 20% of Danish families to stay together until the children are 14-16 years old, and consequently that 80% of child-families will consist of single mothers and step-brothers and -sisters. A myth was created: most modern children will experience a separation from one of their parents during childhood. This brought about high coverage in the media and was taken as proof of the dissolution of the nuclear family. But (again) closer documentation was forgotten.

A later statistical investigation made by The Danish Central Bureau of Statistics (Danmarks Statistik) about the number of children that will experience a divorce showed exactly the opposite. Most Danish children are - irrespectively of the turbulent years of societal- and familial changes in this country - living their childhood and youth together with both parents, whereas a minority will experience a divorce (Befolkningens bevægelser, 1985). Let's see the latest figures:

Table 1: *Children 0-6 years living together with both parents, in a step-family or with a singl-parent, 1991*

	Both parents	Step-family	Single parent	Percent
0-2	90	1		9
3-6	80	5		14

The fact that a considerable number of modern children will be confronted with a divorce is of course not unimportant, and it is correct that a growing number of children will today experience a divorce compared to earlier times; but this does not mean that there are fewer children today that are growing up with both their biological parents than earlier. This number has in fact been quite constant during the

last 100 years in this country. If anything, there are more children today that experience childhood with both parents than there were a hundred years ago. The main reason behind this fact is that the number of children that will be confronted with the death of one of its parents has declined sharply. (Hansen, 1986)

Rikke: we have a nice time on my birthday.

A contributory explanation of the fact that the rising divorce-rate has been seen by some experts as a sign that not only the traditional nuclear family is threatened, but worse, that this will spoil the life of the majority of children, is connected with the research-based knowledge of the mainly negative consequences of a divorce on the development of the personality of the child. But this knowledge is mainly derived from American studies from the 1950s, where divorces were found to be a marked developmental threat for children. One should, however, be very cautious when using such culture-specific and time-bound research on 1990s society. A newer Danish study by Nissen (1984) shows that many children seen in a longitudinal perspective are managing a divorce in a less negative way than previously thought. This positive management was greatly enhanced, where the parents were supporting the child – and this was the case both shortly after the occurrence of the divorce and several years later.

The myth of the diminished socialisation-function of the family in the modern welfare state

An important part of the idea of the 'functional-deflation' of the family in the modern welfare state has to do with the function of the family as a primary socialising entity: it is seen that day care, school and peer group take over the socialisation of the child, and this, in accordance with the myth, threatens and weakens the impor-

tance of the family. In this country consequences of the widespread public day care system for socialization have been in special focus.

It is a fact that most Danish children, because of the employment patterns of both parents, are cared for outside the family. Many children are in public day care for more awake hours than they are in the custody of mother and father. This has led to the argument that the function of the family today has been markedly deflated when it comes to the care for a new generation of children. It is argued that the dual-working parents of today generally are so overloaded that they have serious problems, handling their caring responsibility - an "abdication of parenthood" as Dencik (1989) has conceptualised this phenomenon. The eventual burdens on the modern family will be touched upon later. But there is little doubt that a considerable number of families with children are confronted with stressful living conditions; but this is not a useful argument that has much to do with the discussion about the 'functional deflation' of the modern family. On the contrary, the emotional aspect of the caring function of the modern family is strengthened in a tacit functional division between the day care institution and the family. The present primary role of the family in a rapidly changing society is its function as the 'emotional zone of stability'; in the developmental perspective of young children living in a socially expanded world, the function of the family is to secure children's cravings for intimacy, love, security and stability. This point is of outmost importance because one must realise that the modern child in day care is confronted with complex social demands from very early in life, but this takes place in a sphere of neutral emotionality and the expectation of early civilised behaviour (Dencik, Langsted and Sommer, 1989).

The modern family: Arrangement-family or negotiation-family?

A special element in the anxiety about the conditions for the modern family has been labelled the *arrangement-* or the *time-manager family* (Jørgensen, et. al., 1986). This prototype of family only meets at the dinner-table and the time is mainly used to make coordination and arrangements, telling where one is the next day, who is responsible for shopping this time, or when there is time in everybody's calender for a cozy evening with the family. A negatively loaded judgment is traceable in those terms, carrying an underlying message that there is a lack of shared meaning and positive togetherness in the modern individualistic time-manager family, with everyone occupied in pursuing of his or her own activities.

Especially in families with older children there are a lot of things to be coordinated and arranged. But this type of arrangement-family contains a positive aspect, that has to do with changed power-relations, reflecting the democratic profile of the

modern Scandinavian family. Not only one person has the ultimate power to decide what shall be going on in the family - activity is to a high degree dependent upon *negotiations* between individual members of the family. In our own research on 130 families in the five Nordic countries with 5 year olds, we have traced a characteristic pattern of processes of negotiations being a vital part of the everyday life of the modern child - which is a concrete example of the growing humanisation and individualisation process of society. This trend is supported by other research on 13-15 year old Danish children (Jørgensen, Gamst & Andersen, 1986). Children in the democratic Scandinavian welfare states - even very small children - are to a great extent involved in decisions that concern themselves. For the pre-school child, this is for example about what clothes to wear in day care today, decisions about who to visit, or the planning of what to do together next weekend. When the parents have to decide, this is in a host of matters concerning the child typically not done by giving a non-negotiable order; but more often through a conversation where the arguments of the child are allowed to influence and modify the decision.

This strategy of modern parents has far-reaching consequences for the socialization of the child and for future society. From very early in life, the child is given the impression that important conditions in life are not absolutes, ruled by faith or external authorities. Vital matters in life are negotiable, which in essence is the underlying structural quality framing interpersonal relations in a democratic culture.

The idea of the time-pressed family: Fact or fiction?

This is a common picture of the contemporary child-rearing family:

> "Today it is the typical pattern that both parents are working outside the family and the children are looked after in day care.
>
> As a consequence children's and their parents' paths diverge, already while the children are very small. They have their own separate worlds of experience, and are together for so few moments that it is difficult for them to create a world of shared experience.
>
> The roots of childhood have as a consequence become "looser" and traditions and norms more fluid. This has for many parents led to their "abdication" - they become indifferent and the children receive a laissez-faire upbringing" (Damgaard, Holst & Sløk, 1988, p. 210).

Let's have a look at what is mythology and what is reality. The major background behind the myth about the time-pressed family is the change in working conditions, especially for mothers.

A general overview of maternal work patterns

From 1960 until today an increasing number of Danish mothers have become active in the work force. According to Langsted & Sommer (1993) the following historical trend illustrates the most distinct secular development in Denmark in the mother's relation to employment and children:

- In the 50s mothers stayed at home and cared for the children.
- In the 60s women began working outside the home, but stopped during the children's pre-school years.
- In the 70s still more women were employed, but stopped or worked part time while the children were small.
- In the 80s and the 90s not only almost all mothers with children aged 0-6 years are connected to the labour market, but increasing numbers are working full time, and keeping their jobs even while the children are small. Furthermore, another new trend appears: the smaller the children, the more hours Danish mothers work every day.

Steffen, my dog and I watch TV. Hello Fatte!

Within this relatively short period of time there has been a revolutionary transformation of small children's daily life. The development in mothers' increasing involvement in the work force has been a decisive element in the development of not only new social political initiatives but also the imperative background behind

both the State's and local authorities' involvement in the establishment of new options for child care, when the mothers are absent. The expansion of the necessary public day care institutions took place in this period so fast, that there was insufficient time to wait for research results or professional evaluation of these options.

The present situation concerning the employment of mothers shows that 95% of mothers of 0-6 years olds are enrolled in the work force, and while 2/3 of the mothers twenty years ago were housewives, this accounts only for 3-4% of the mothers of today (Langsted & Sommer, 1993). So, even compared to Scandinavian and European contexts, countries with similar developments, this process has in Denmark been particularly marked, with the consequence that the traditional type of family with a woman exclusively caring for the children has almost ceased to exist and has become an anachronistic exception of the ordinary pattern of life.

In Denmark full time employment of 38 hours per week was in 1989 stipulated by collective agreement. But if one looks at the average number of working hours per week for married couples with a youngest child of 0-6 years, fathers are working 42 hours outside home and mothers 34 hours. In families with small children the total average number of working hours per week outside the home is 76 hours (Glavind 1989; Andersen, 1990). So no wonder the idea of time-pressure and overload has been launched.

Parental preferences: Work and/or children?

Do modern parents really want to live in the way presented above, or is it so that the mother - given the possibilities - would like to stay at home and take care of her children?

With the present research evidence at hand there is a complex answer to this question. First: The modern mother does not intend to skip her workforce commitment: Only 2% of a representative sample wish to return home. However, approximately half the number of the mothers would prefer fewer hours for themselves and their spouse (Christoffersen, Bertelsen & Vestergård, 1987).

Belief systems change with changes in life circumstances. One might ask, then, how is the ideal combination of work, family and care for children, seen from the perspective of the parents? And what changes do we see? The Danish National Institute of Social Research has for some decades asked mothers of young children about their attitudes. Twenty years ago - in the 70s - the ideal type of family according to the perception of mothers was the one with a full-time employed father and a mother staying at home caring for the children.

Table 2
Secular changes in maternal beliefs: what type of family arrangement is perceived as best when the children are small? 1970 and 1989. Percent.

Description of the family				
FATHER	MOTHER	CHILDREN	1970	1989
Full-time job	Home	Home	31	9
Full-time job	Home	Part-time day care	22	6
Part-time job	Part-time	Part-time day care	15	41
Full-time job	Part-time	Part-time day care	31	42
Full-time job	Full-time	Full-time day care	1	3
Home	Full-time	Home	0	0
Total:			100	101

Source: Christoffersen, et. al. 1987 and Bertelsen, 1991.

Today this has completely changed. No more than 15% think that such an arrangement is ideal. Interestingly, what might be labelled 'the part-time family' has become the preferred ideal for most: 80% of mothers of children of 0-6 years of age prefer a type of family where the mother is in a part time job and the child in day care half the day. One half of these 80% prefer that her spouse is full-time employed, and the other half that the father also has a part time job. Such a combination with mother and father both in part time work is rarely found in this country.

Despite some divergent findings about parental wishes for the combination of work and the care of the child, it is obvious that the claim of the typical mother's inner wish being to leave her work in order to care for the children at home is a fiction - on the contrary, there is a strong wish to *combine* work and family life and an acceptance of public day care as a positive necessity for the child.

Time-pressure as a modern living condition?

Time-pressure and lack of time have often been claimed to be the number one prototype description of the modern dual wage-earner family: the parents in an eternal roundabout between work, day care, shops and home - and when finally at home there are the inevitable and recurrent practical matters - cooking, cleaning, doing the dishes, washing the clothes - so there is very little time left in the stressful daily life to be together with the children.

This perception of the typical modern dual wage earner childrearing family has been so obvious and self-evident as a sweeping generalisation in our country that a representative study has only recently investigated this theme. The Danish National Institute of Social Research (Socialforsknings-instituttet) asked parents of 0-14 year-olds the following question: "Concerning your present situation, do you think you have plenty of leisure time, sufficient leisure time or too little leisure time?" (Andersen, 1991). The results indicate that the idea of the time-pressed modern family to a certain degree is both a fiction and a fact! 41% of families with children, compared to 30% of families without children, report too little spare time. However, despite the fact that it is not the majority that experience a lack of spare time, this lack is a fact for quite a high percentage of Danish families with children. But who is it that experiences a lack of time and too little leisure? In accordance with the findings there are no dramatic differences between groups, but single mothers in the work-force, parents with infants and very small children, full-time employed mothers and parents in career-oriented occupations feel the sparsity of time more than other groups.

The parental role in the modern family: Parental abdication or Mum and Dad as buffers?

But how should one paraphrase the parental role in the modern family: Abdication or Mum and Dad as buffers? On the background of the above-presented indications about the parental priorities concerning work and children, one might ask: is it generally a fact that Danish parents are mainly worn out 'workaholics' with a permissive and defensive style towards their children? As pointed out earlier: "This has for many parents lead to their 'abdication' - they become indifferent and the children are receiving a laissez-faire upbringing"? (Damgard, Holst & Sløk, 1988).

There is no doubt in my mind that the picture of abdication from the parental role points to certain characteristics of role reversal that might be observed in some overloaded families with extensive social and psychological problems, but is this a valid description of the typical child-family? If one takes the data presented above about the parental work-force commitment too seriously, one might mistakenly conclude that this has the consequence of the postulated myth of the time-pressed modern family. But - and this is very important - one should be very cautious when making direct inferences from a structural level, for example from the amount of working hours, as to how children are raised and are living in everyday life. Both my own research on the everyday life of children and families in the Scandinavian countries and research done by others (Haavind, 1987; Borg, 1991) indicates that it is more adequate to see modern parents, acting at an intervening level, as having an *active buffer* function - being a kind of shock absorber - reducing the demands facing the child from the family-external world. In their everyday life strategies par-

ents make efforts to protect their child from societal processes which they experience as harmful to their child; but by doing so, they may sometimes feel overloaded themselves. For example we have ample evidence that many modern parents are very capable of time-management, structuring and organizing the day on behalf of the child in such compensative ways that the child hardly experiences the temporal necessities and cravings stemming from the work-life of the parents. But in doing so, it might be that mother now and then uses so much energy that she becomes stressed and overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy as a mother. And this points to another pertinent issue of the modern family, the difference in sex concerning male and female responsibility within the family, and its foundation in traditional ideas about mothers and children.

Despite profound secular changes in the role of women, as pointed out earlier, the myth of motherhood is still deeply ingrained in our gender-views. One might for example ask: why do many working mothers still feel guilty when leaving their children? Why do working fathers not feel guilty? And in accordance: why do we accept that fathers and mothers are judged in fundamentally different ways when it comes to evaluating the possible negative consequences of the fact that *both parents* are working? Few experts and few lay people have thought that it might be just as harmful to the well-being of our children that many fathers in our society have to work far more hours than mothers.

Myths about children and mothers: The fragile child and the ideal mother

In some respect the lesson from the Danish "natural experiment", with its profound social change that affects the living conditions of children, is that societal change also induces change in mother's and father's beliefs and opinions and in the culture as well. But some belief systems change very slowly and are in fact resisting change. Such a phenomenon might be conceptualised as a "cultural lack", indicating that ideas, conceptions and opinions about the child and the responsibilities of the parents are quite traditional and lagging behind societal developments. Let's have a look at this in the perspective of children's rights: despite increasing divorce rates, most children in Danish society still grow up in a typical nuclear family with two parents. In that respect – in such a family structural perspective – Denmark as a member of the international community did not have many hesitations about endorsing Article 18 in the United Nations' Convention about the Rights of Children. It says:

"The member states shall strive to ensure the acknowledgement of the principle that both parents have a shared responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child".

First: in this statement is it clearly said that the child needs two parents. Second, an equality proposition is formulated: both mothers and fathers are equal when it comes to the responsibility and importance for the upbringing and development of the child. So at first, one might think that this is not only a statistically confirmed fact (i.e.: that most children are living with both parents). In an advanced welfare state like the Danish with strong traditions of equal rights for men and women, such a statement should of course be in genuine harmony with fundamental beliefs in our culture. Unfortunately, this seems not to be the fact. If one scrutinises common beliefs, two often unchallenged and persistent ideas emerge: the conception of the fragile child, and the dogma of the ideal mother. Such ideas stand in the way of a wholehearted acceptance of the *real responsibility* of both parents when it comes to the upbringing and development of the child in the family and society. Despite the fact that the myths are about the child on the one hand, and the mother on the other and are intimately interwoven, they essentially need each other – no conception about the fragile child without a myth about the ideal mother.

Katrine: Mum and Dad look after me while I am sick.

Let us now look at the idea of the fragile child - with the infancy period as our target. My reason for this focus is this observation: the younger the child, the more self-evident the two myths seem to appear. The infancy period of childhood is especially mythologically infected, because the baby, sphinx-like, constitutes more of a mystery than the older child. We can talk to the pre-verbal infant, but cannot make a mutual conversation. Getting to know the infant, we have to make inferences about its internal state, enter into the spirit of the infant and gradually familiarise ourselves with it. Myths about the essence of the child then arise in such a situation, difficult as it is to grasp. It is created through a projection, which clothes the sphinx with inherent characteristics, needs and wishes.

The dogma about the fragile child

The dogma about the fragile child has had many spokesmen within child-psychology. For example a considerable part of this myth about the generalised child can be traced back to the influence of ethological, psychoanalytic and clinical apprehensions stated in the period from the 1920s and until the middle of this century (for a more extensive investigation, see: Sommer, 1984; Scarr & Dunn, 1987). Those ideas have been popularised to such a degree that until recently they were an almost unchallenged part of the conventional cultural child-wisdom in our country.

The conception of the fragile child sees childhood as a critical phase of life, filled with threats and possibilities of psychological trauma. In the first year of life the child is perceived as especially vulnerable when it comes to sensations, and its social dependency and fragility are seen as marked. The development of a separate identity takes place during a so-called 'monotropic attachment' (Bowlby, 1973) which means that the child's normal development and the formation of an early identity only takes place if the child is *first* engaged in an intimate, symbiotic relation with a single maternal figure. Furthermore, the child's early experience is seen as a sine qua non for later existence. This idea has been popularised in what one might call a myth of 'psychological immunisation' - a mechanical conception about upbringing and development that makes believe that early positive experiences so to speak immunise the human being against break-downs caused by negative experiences and problems later on in life. Another consequence of the conception of the fragile and vulnerable child is that it both contributes to and is a derivation of the cultural and personal anxiety, which was discussed earlier in this paper.

The idealisation of motherhood

In an almost symbiotic dependency on the idea about the vulnerable, fragile child in need of a parental figure, lives the dogma about the ideal mother. The idealisation of motherhood is a historical phenomenon that can be traced to societal and cultural

changes in the 18th century with roots in the rise of industrialisation. Taylor (1989) shows in a pervasive manner in his book "The sources of the self - the making of the modern identity", that mothers in historical epochs before the 18th century have loved their children and married on the basis of attraction. What is changing then, is not that mothers began to love their children, as mistakingly claimed by some. What happens is rather an *awakening for and an idealisation of such emotions* between mother and child. Such dispositions begin to a higher degree to be perceived as a vital part of life and female identity, but at the same time this puts obligations and demands on women, too. In other words: a gradual shift in ethical code takes place; and the nature of motherhood is described as the maternal relation to the child as a necessity of life for both. This relation is seen as carried by very deep emotions; it is irreproachable, natural and obvious - all the characteristics of the myth.

The mythology of motherhood continues more or less unchallenged, and it is prolonged and sustained by much child psychology, especially during the middle of this century. As pointed out by Haavind (1987) in much child- and developmental psychological research during the 1950s and 1960s, it was either the explicit dogma or the tacit assumption that women as mothers were the best qualified concerning the proper care of young children. It was thought to be in the best interest of the child to start early in life with only one attachment figure - the monotropic axiom - which, as it turned out, should be the natural mother. The function of the father in his early relation to the child was only indirect, as it was limited to his *supportive function*; supporting his spouse to be a better mother. In other words: cultural practice in those years became so to speak the research-supported 'law of proper family life'.

This idealised imperative of the mother-child relationship has in recent years been highly criticised and challenged by research (Schaffer, 1989; Eyer 1993; Sommer 1993b). Such traditional conceptions impede real culturally supported changes in ideas about equality between the sexes, for example, the father's possibilities of establishing a close and mutually binding relationship with his children. Furthermore, such traditional points of view inhibit the true liberation of the modern woman in her struggle to play an active role in society without being tormented by chronic guilt feelings at leaving her vulnerable and mother-dependent child. Children love their mothers and they are loved by her, and that relationship is not challenged by this harsh criticism of the mythologised ideal picture of motherhood. This picture is painted in a period of history that is qualitatively different from the present situation, and furthermore it is out of touch with both carefully collected experience and research evidence about the lives of typical non-deviant children.

Fauzan: I am strong.

As a consequence of societal changes, there exists today in modern society, a different relation between children and mothers. A generation of children is each day, as mentioned earlier, from very early in life, living together with a lot of people other than mother – in day care, and later in school. Therefore, knowledge about the caring relationship and the basic socio-emotional needs of the child that might have seemed useful 30 years ago, has in the contemporary context turned out to be ideology, hampering our adequate understanding of the developmental potentialities of the modern child. Here we face a tremendous need for research on the present living conditions of children – for example studies that can illuminate children's ability to handle change and different living conditions. But some new perspectives are emerging from research.

An alternative perspective:
The resilient child - capacities and social competences

For a couple of decades extensive international empirical research about children has been done that should induce profound changes in our basic conception of what children are capable of and in need of (introductions: Smith & Ulvund, 1991; Parke, 1991). The personal resources and social capacities of the child have - even from the beginning of life - for too long been underestimated. The nature and developmental potentialities of the child have too often been confused with certain narrowly-defined, time-dependent cultural ways of life (i.e. the traditional nuclear family as the developmental arena). It is not possible in this article to present this new research in great detail; but in the following a status with far-reaching consequences concerning an alternative view of child and motherhood will be presented.

Spontaneous exuberance - the outside world as a challenge

The picture of the child that is now drawn has a much more colourful and optimistic touch. The typical child is seen as a basically active, robust and mentally organised organism, who explores with curiosity the physical and social world and perceives it as having a wealth of potential and challenge. Researchers have talked about an early capacity for 'risk-taking' and the active search for challenging stimulation (Field, 1990). The child is still seen as dependent on personal maternal contacts; but she is to a much higher degree seen as an active agent contributing to the child's development. The idea of the fragile child is not abandoned totally, but it does not characterise the typical child, only the potentially deviant and threatened child with special needs for protection, care and help - in other words, the child known by professionals dealing with children with special problems.

A new perspective on the exclusiveness of the mother

The exclusive importance of mothers for the development of the child, and the tendency to explain developmental damages and malfunctions of personality as being caused by the separation from the mother has for more than two decades been strongly challenged by international research on children (Rutter, 1981; Eyer, 1993). After a thorough examination of the relevant research, Schaffer as early as 1977 asks in a very provocative way whether children need a mother or not. His answer is both "yes" and "no". "Yes" - if it means that children are involved in a loving and caring relationship to another human being. "No" - if it means that the mother, being the person that gave birth to the child, inevitably must be *the* person - in other words, that nobody can take her place. "No" again - if caring for a child must indicate an exclusive caring relationship to only one human figure who is totally responsible for the child's emotional and social development. But "yes" again - if it is accepted that a handful of important human beings to whom the child

is accustomed can maintain a secure, stable and developing caring - environment during the years of childhood.

In such expanded arguments for motherhood, the concept of 'mother' is defined by some personal qualities and actions as a human being, for example, the ability to take up another person's perspective and to react in accordance with that. To be a mother in a psychological and developmentally potent way, then, is not simply given by being related by blood. Rather, this potency is constituted through both experiences in the adult's own childhood, and through accumulated experience derived from the numerous situations occurring in a responsible relation with a child. To be a psychologically active parent means "learning by doing", thus it is not only the child that is influenced, parents are socialised too.

In this argumentation it is not held that children in general are not in need of mothers, neither is it postulated that any mother is easily replaceable by anyone else. The main point is to criticise the idealised and romantic stereotype of the mother-figure in our culture and to highlight the much broader and more complex nature of the early relationship between the modern child and its social world. In the life of modern children in the dual-wage earner family, which is the prototype family in this country, the child's social world has expanded widely from very early on in life to a degree that highlights the child's remarkable capacities to develop a repertoire of positive social contacts. In everyday reality with the typical child living in both family and the socially expanded environment of day care, mother is one important person among others.

The inherent potentialities of the human child

To put it bluntly: the dramatic changes in living conditions have shown that the previous assumption about the crisis-induced, vulnerable and mother dependent child simply doesn't fit the social realities and developmental demands of modern times. Furthermore, it is out of touch with much new research that clearly shows that children from the infancy period on are capable of establishing varied social interaction to a much higher degree than previously thought by researchers. That the 'proper upbringing' of a new generation goes through the exclusive and binding relation to one maternal figure might even be a typical European stereotype, closely tied to the history of the industrialisation era. The anthropologists Weissner and Gallimore (1977) found in their extensive investigation in several industrialised and non-industrialised cultures that the mother was the exclusive and primary caring person in only five out of more than a hundred cultures. Other persons played important roles in the infancy period and later. The patterns of contacts between children and adults, and types of families varied to a great extent in the different cultures. This

highlights the 'plasticity of the human child' and of family and cultural arrangements, and is a powerful indication of man as the inventive, adaptable and opportunist species of the earth.

Conclusion: Mythology and conceptions in a changing society

As shown in this paper, there are still in our culture marked negatively loaded ideas about the consequences of the changed living conditions of children. One might suppose that myths belong to bygone days: when the level of information increases and we are indeed on the threshold of the blessings of the information-processing society - then the myth should not attract the general 'well-informed' citizen. Such a naive belief in progress is, however, not valid, because it does not consider the more basic consequences of societal change. It is precisely from change that the myth gets its power.

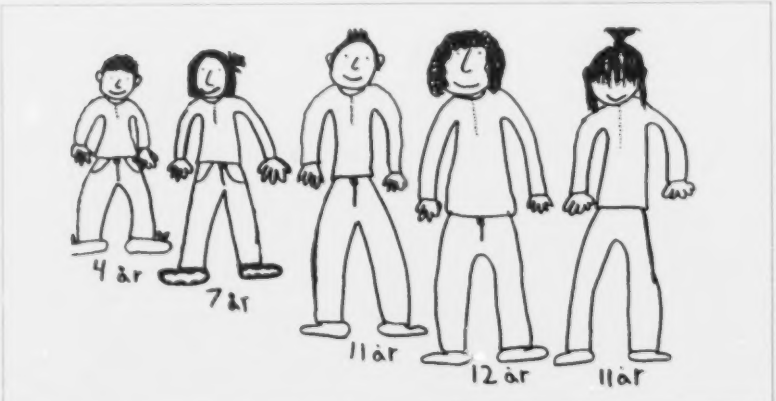
If one looks closer at the ideological debate on children's living conditions in our society during recent decades, where changes in living conditions have been especially marked, the following has been striking: the child, and what is supposedly good and bad for it, has been part of an ideological controversy which in a decisive way has influenced the general cultural picture of modern childhood: worries, pessimism and black shadows have dominated this picture and have led to what was earlier paraphrased as the modern childhood anxiety.

The decline of stable and predictable norms of upbringing and general ideas about the child have furthermore, both on the societal and the personal level, led to a growing sensitivity and dependence upon expert interpretation. When the text of culture becomes blurred and hard to decipher, let us call in the expert! But statements by experts interpreting the consequences of the new living conditions for children have often led to contradictory conclusions. Furthermore, a historical perspective of conceptions about the child might induce confusion because advice about what is in the best interest of the child is markedly varied. The changes in the twentieth century have been more rapid than ever, and therefore we will see more changes in the advice given to parents from, for example, 1914 until today than in the years before that (Scarr & Dunn, 1987). In every era, in every society, the child is conceptualised as being of a different nature.

In this paper we have traced some pertinent modern myths about the supposed consequences of living conditions for modern children as new problems facing society.

The most fundamental function of the myth is to create meaning in the midst of chaos - to establish a sense of security by giving easy-to-grasp and obvious truths about man's place and tasks in life. However, as a key characteristic of our era, security and stability are not given; the fundamental values of culture are shaken and have created what was previously called the normative crisis. This is very important to remember - because this situation has led to the fact that the new features of societal development and children's changing living conditions (for example new types of families; rising divorce rates; maternal employment; institutionalising) cannot be grasped by the conceptual models based on bygone times. The cultural reaction to rapid societal change almost inevitably turns out to be defensive, simply because the new living conditions are so divergent from the underlying conception of the 'normal state' of affairs.

So, what is clearly needed is a rethinking and an updated conception of the capabilities of the child living in a changing world. The typical modern child is meeting its living conditions as a sensitive individual when it comes to both positive as well as negative consequences; but it must also be viewed as resistant, resilient and vigorous. In accordance with the child-researchers Judy Dunn and Sandra Scarr (1987) this can be paraphrased metaphorically: the child of today is not a china-doll that breaks and is hard to repair when confronted with her first major blow from the outside world. Rather, our child shall be seen as a more resistant plastic doll. Indeed, she is affected by blows, but she is well able to regenerate her shape.



Line: The kids in my family: my brother Soren, 4 years old; me, Line, 7 years old; my cousin Troels, 11 years old; my cousin Charlotte, 12 years old and my cousin Mie, 11 years old.

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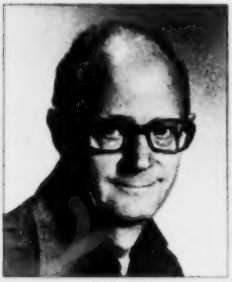
The Key to Quality is Qualifying the Teachers

Mogens Nielsen



Mogens Nielsen, Professor at the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, was asked to speak to us because he, more than anyone else, has worked with the very important question of quality in teacher education. He asked the question: How much and what kind of freedom must the individual teacher have? How much control should be imposed on the teacher through curriculum, tests and administrative control?

Professor Mogens Nielsen was born in Denmark in 1931, educated as a schoolteacher. After some years of practice, he studied psychology and pedagogy at the University of Copenhagen. Mogens Nielsen has earlier been a scholarly associate at The Danish National Institute for Educational Research and The Danish National Pedagogical Library and is now professor at The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, teaching pedagogy. Research includes curricula, the history of pedagogy and present development of teacher training.

Loris Malaguzzi of Reggio Emilia is quoted in the programme of this conference for the statement:"First you have to teach the teachers."

One could see this as a truism, but it is not. The schools are now accused of bad teaching in report after report, beginning in the middle of the 1970s in USA and spreading from there to Europe, especially to the northern part of this continent.

One of the most influential of all these reports has been "A Nation at Risk", submitted in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Thomas Popkevitz gives this characteristic of the reports:

> "In place of analysis, these reports offer exhortation and prophecy. Their language bemoans the fall from grace and holds out righteous action as the means by which redemption is possible. The National Commission on Excellence in

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> Education states that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our future as a nation and a people" (p. 5)" (1).

Very few have questioned the conclusions drawn in these reports. That is curious indeed, for there is much to question:

A crusade

Gerald W. Bracey puts it this way:

> The authors of "A Nation at Risk" launched a crusade for school reform by claiming that America was drowning in "a rising tide of mediocrity". *There is no such tide.* Those who penned this document were sometimes merely naive in their interpretations, but at other times they verged on the criminally uncritical about the misinformation they were fed. (One wonders whether they understood it.) (2)

The official reaction to the alarming messages in the reports was not to attempt to qualify the teachers but to control them. Some overtly expressed their distrust in teacher education:

> "Teaching is still an art of individual virtuosity. Some people can do it and some people can't and I don't care how many courses people have, it does not make them any better." (3)

With these words the former U.S. secretary of Education William Bennett expressed his lack of respect for teacher education. He said this in 1986 while he was still in charge, and more than a personal attitude was at issue here. With these words he joined the choir of governors and other persons and institutions who did not only find teacher preparation programmes superfluous but actually saw them as obstacles for individuals seeking to enter teaching.

As Robert A. Roth wrote in an article in "Phi Delta Kappan" in December 1989:

> "Formal training for teachers was perceived to be not only unnecessary, but also a disincentive to those considering entering the profession." (4)

As Robert Roth points out, it is ironic that:

> "the continuing erosion of confidence in teacher education has emanated from a

reform movement that has focused largely on ways of strengthening the preparation of teachers." (5)

We can not brush this tendency to de-professionalisation of teachers aside as being an American phenomenon. The same trend can be observed in European countries. In Denmark, the Minister of Education and Research recently wrote in "U91. The new pattern in Danish policy of education and research":

"We must realise that trade unions and strong opinion-forming groups of professionals are perverting the discussion of educational topics. For the demands for education are not only a means of qualifying but also a means of promoting one's own exclusivity at the expense of less educated groups. That is the reason why it is so urgent to attach importance to real, rather than formal qualifications. Breaches must be blown up in the institutions' monopoly of emitting certificates. A short time ago, just that happened to teachers who had graduated from teachers' colleges: they lost their exclusive right to be entitled to teach in The Folkeskole." (6)

Maybe the German professor Hermann Giesecke hit the bull's eye when in a short essay in "Die Deutsche Schule", no. 1, 1990, he remarked that nobody, perhaps save the pupils, really wants teacher-professionalism:

"What you want is teachers whom you can blame for crises in childhood and youth because they failed to 'bring them up' - whatever that means." (7)

From an English perspective the de-professionalisation of teachers finds expression thus:

"In the past, teachers were expected to be professional people, responsible for judgment about their own and their pupils' circumstances. So wrongheaded were these judgments that we have been forced to turn teachers into state servants acting under the state's instruction. Any choice they may have had between different examinations must be reduced and then abolished." (8)

This is not what a Secretary of State for Education and Science actually has said, but what, according to the author of the lines cited above, Tyrrell Burgess, professor at the Polytechnic of East London, she would have said, had she used honest arguments for increased state control:

"that those who have had responsibilities have failed to discharge them, that the

Secretary of State will do much better and that there can be no untoward consequences." (9)

But there can be untoward consequences and this is just what Her Majesty's Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, Eric Bolton, warns against in his second annual report, 1988-1989:

"There is a risk that some aspects of the implementation of the National Curriculum and its related assessment and reporting may undermine teachers' job satisfaction and morale. That risk arises not from the amount of work and the pressing time scales involved, though they are of concern, but from too much detail and prescription in external instructions and guidance and an undue insistence upon cross-checking everything that teachers are called upon to do."

"If actually carrying out assessments, recording and reporting outcomes and accounting for what has been done do turn out to be overly prescriptive and inquisitorial, not only will the quality of teaching and learning be adversely affected, but the competence, professionalism and creativity of the teaching force may be undermined. Ultimately, the effective implementation of the Educational Reform Act will depend upon the work of teachers, who are trusted to use their pedagogical skills and experience in the interest of their pupils and the nation, with a minimum of external checks and balances, and who are properly accountable for what they do. Too much prescription and too detailed an external scrutiny of the work of teachers will lead to impossible work loads; bureaucratic inflexibility and a de-skilled teaching force." (10)

Effects

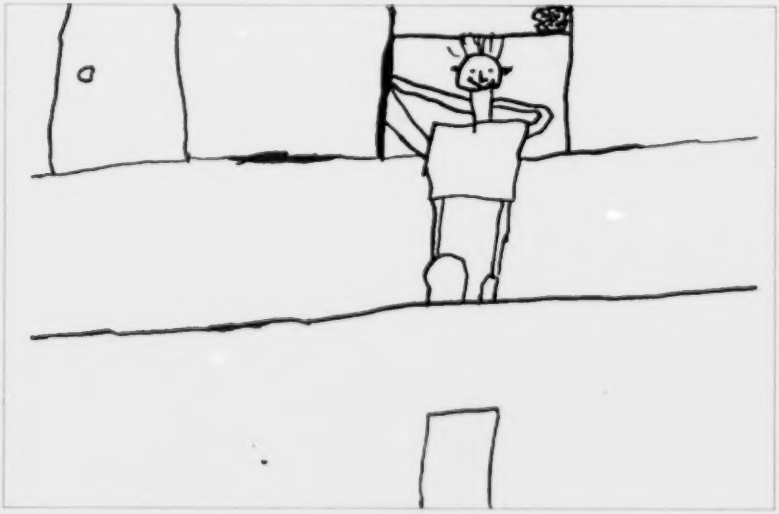
Certainly, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's warnings have to be taken seriously. Top-down reforms have now been effectuated, especially in Great Britain and in the U.S.A., for long enough to make it possible to assess the effects. Several researchers have done so.

One of them, Brian Woolnough, from Oxford University, gives this example:

"The incessant, ill-prepared changes imposed over the last 5 years on conscientious and highly committed science teachers were reducing these teachers' effectiveness. It was clear that some of the centralised directives, with the tendency to deskill professional science teachers by telling them what and how to teach and how to assess their students, was having a detrimental effect on the quality of the science teaching even in these 'good' schools." (11)

An American researcher, Linda M. McNeil, gives this summary of her own research results:

> "Good teaching can't be engineered into existence. But an engineering approach to schooling can crowd out good teaching. Instead of holding up a variety of models for practice and learning from their strengths, these reforms continue our historically flawed search for "one best way" to run our schools. These reforms take a cynical view of teachers' ability to contribute constructively to schooling; they choose to make the content, the assessment of students, and the decisions about pedagogy all teacherproof, so that a standardised model will become the norm.
>
> "Such reforms render teaching and the curriculum unauthentic. If we are to engage students in learning, we must reverse this process. When school knowledge is not credible to students, they opt out and decide to wait until "later", to learn "what you really need to know". Mechanical teaching processes knowledge in a way that guarantees it will be something other than credible. Centralised curricula, centralised tests of outcomes, and standardised teacher behaviour can only frustrate those teachers whose "passion for teaching" has shown students (and the rest of us) what education should be about." (12)



I am curious and climb up to reach the candy bag.

Here you have some teacher commentaries about how they find themselves placed in such a situation:

> "I started seeing myself not taking the risks I used to. I used to do all kinds of interesting things with my students - build things all over the classroom. But every once in a while someone would notice that the classroom wasn't as neat as it should be..... and since anything can be pointed to, you start to retrench. You feel a lack of growth and you look around, and I decided to leave.

Another teacher has this to say about merit evaluation:

> "I think the merit evaluation is even worse than seniority. Oh, my God. In this particular school it has destroyed any type of relations. I mean, you look at the person next door to you and you say: "See, I wonder, how many points she has". So instead of encouraging teachers to be more open about what they are doing, there is not a bit of sharing. When you are in competition for your job, you're pitting one person against another. I think in this business you can't do that. Because we tell the kids that everybody is unique." (13)

Homo poeta

"Violation of persons as homo poeta" is what Arthur Wirth of Washington University calls this way of treating teachers. He borrowed the terms "violation" and "homo poeta" from Ernest Becker's book "The Structure of Evil" In this book, Becker, according to Wirth, pointed out that since the Age of Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have had two major images of man: l'homme machine (man as mechanism) and homo poeta (man as meaning maker).

As Wirth interprets Becker, the problem with the concept of man as a machine is that it is a violation of our deeper needs as homo poeta. Whenever we create institutions that deny persons the opportunity to form their world so they can act in it as meaning makers, we create structures of evil.

> "In our time such institutions are not only immoral, they are also unpractical, because our chance of successfully meeting the problems of turbulent change in the present period of momentous transition depends on utilising the full range of our creative strengths as homo poeta.",

remarks Arthur Wirth and he continues:

> "It has taken me a while to see things this way. In the late seventies I was aware of the growing concern about lowered productivity in American industry and

schools. I was aware also of the new press by educational policymakers to start treating children's learning as a measurable production function on the assumption that the only learning that counts is learning that can be counted, and the parallel assumption that teachers will be made accountable in terms of test-score results. What disturbed me was my growing awareness that the teachers I thought of as most committed and creative were becoming demoralised and thinking of quitting. Some of the rest were cheating to beat the test-score pressures." (14)

Not so few observations confirm this point of view and it seems somewhat odd that it should be so difficult for politicians and school-administrators to see this. Perhaps there is a point in the warning that the prestigious American group, National Academy of Education, issued in 1987:

"At root here is a fundamental dilemma. Those personal qualities that we hold dear - resilience and courage in the face of stress, a sense of craft in our work, a commitment to justice and caring in our social relationships, a dedication to advancing the public good in our communal life - are exceedingly difficult to assess. And so unfortunately we are apt to measure what we can and eventually come to value what is measured over what is left unmeasured. The shift is subtle and occurs gradually. It first invades our language and then slowly begins to dominate our thinking. It is all around us and we too are part of it. In neither academic nor popular discourse about schools does one nowadays find much reference to the important human qualities noted above. The language of academic tests of achievement has become the primary rhetoric of schooling." (15)

So, to quote Arthur Wirth for a last time:

Rationalised functionalism, with hierarchical surveillance, impoverishes the human spirit by denying people access to their dignity and personal enthusiasms. It is crazy-making. Ernest Becker says that when these structures threaten the core of who we are as homo poeta, we should call them what they are - structures of evil". (16)

Now we can see the treating of pupil's learning as a measurable production function and the parallel assumption that teachers can be made accountable on terms of test-score results as an effect of such structures of evil. The tendency to depreciate the education of teachers can be understood as just another instance. But there is a possibility of a second source of public distrust in teacher education, namely the common opinion that the best way to be a teacher is to begin as a trainee under the guidance of an experienced senior teacher.

A good teacher

One of the fiercest attackers of teacher education, the British philosopher Anthony O'Hear, has this to say in a pamphlet: "Who teaches the teachers?", 1988:

> "What, then makes a good teacher? A good teacher will be someone who knows and loves his subject and wants to communicate it t others and who has the emotional maturity to do it successfully. How can we make someone a good teacher? We cannot make a good teacher, because even if we knew exactly what the skills of a good teacher were, we would not know how to impart them. In particular, we do not know how to impart emotional maturity. Nevertheless we can give someone a good grounding for being a good teacher by giving him a good knowledge and understanding of the subject or subjects he is to teach, and by putting him under the guidance and supervision of experienced and proven teachers in his early teaching years". (17)

Rhetorically he asks:

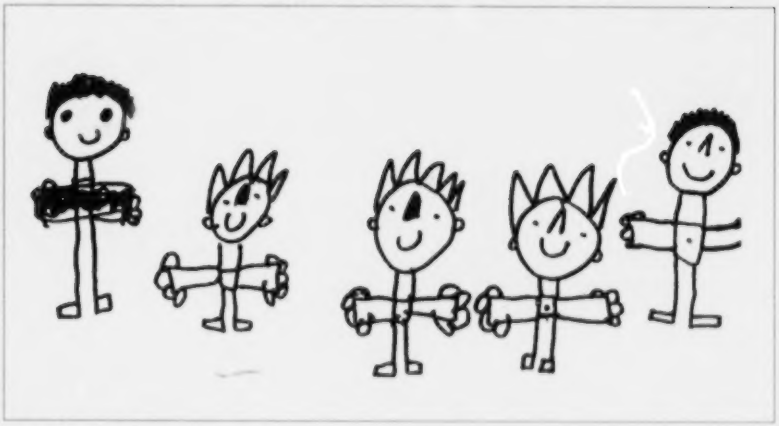
> ".... Is there any evidence that the theoretical studies of education undertaken in formal teacher training, as opposed to studies of one's subject and the teaching practice, actually help to make better teachers? Not so long ago in this country, possession of a degree was generally regarded as a licence to teach, and it still is in the independent sector in this country and other parts of the world. Is there any evidence that the standards of teaching in the maintained sector in this country have benefited from mandatory attendance at theoretical courses in education, and that a knowledge of one's subject and teaching under the guidance of experienced teachers are not the only preparations really relevant to a person's becoming a good teacher?" (18)

As Mike Degenhardt of the University of Tasmania remarks in a review of O'Hear's paper, we should take this pamphlet seriously:

> "It expresses the sort of view that is favoured by many people concerned with education - most of them less eloquent than O'Hear but some of them very powerful. If we would resist such possible developments, arguments must be part of our armoury". (19)

Some of these arguments can find support in research on learning to teach without teacher education. Mike Degenhardt finds O'Hear's notion of being qualified in the subject one is to teach problematic:

> "Graduates in literature or physics might be judged as qualified to teach English or Science. But is three years doing sophisticated criticism or learning to do sci-



We are told a story

entific research *really* an appropriate qualification for one who is to teach how to read and write well or how to grasp the significance of science for life....? Many tutors on postgraduate teacher courses rightly spend time getting their students to rethink the nature of the disciplines they are to teach". (20)

Pedagogical content knowledge

In a study, Pamela L. Grossmann from University of Washington, Seattle, explored the pedagogical content knowledge of three beginning secondary school English teachers without a forma teacher education but with strong backgrounds in literature.

Pedagogical content knowledge - knowledge of how to teach a particular subject - "is an important component of the knowledge base for teaching", Pamela Grossmann writes, and she raises these questions: "... if teacher education can transmit this knowledge, what happens when people enter teaching with no professional preparation? Does a strong college background in a field provide the understanding of a subject necessary for teaching? On his own in classrooms, can beginning teachers rethink their disciplinary knowledge from a pedagogical perspective?" (21)

As regards the three students in this study the answers were negative:

"These teachers' experiences suggest that while they attribute much of what they have learned about teaching to the experience of teaching itself, learning

from experience alone can be problematic. Learning from experience requires first that one interprets that experience. Without a framework for making sense of student difficulties with literary interpretation, the teacher's learning is largely idiosyncratic and potentially mis-educative. As the teachers are isolated in their classrooms, they are dependent on their rather narrow experience of students in making their interpretations. By and large, these teachers had no one with who to test their interpretations of classroom experience; as a result, misleading and potentially miseducative interpretations were left unchallenged". (22)

In contrast to these beginning teachers, graduates of teacher educations who also participated in the Grossmann studies "did not express surprise at what students did not know, nor did they rely on their own experiences as students to shape their assessments of students' prior knowledge and interests". (23)

Pamela Grosmann writes in her concluding remarks:

"Without careful research on the actual content of teacher education coursework, it has been too easy to accept surveys that suggest that prospective teachers acquire valuable pedagogical knowledge only through field experiences, an acceptance that has led to policies that limit or waive pedagogical coursework. Researchers in teacher education need to conceptualise more clearly the relationship between professional knowledge and professional preparation for teaching. By linking pedagogical content knowledge with subject-specific professional coursework, this study represents a beginning effort in this area.

The inclusion of teachers without professional preparation focuses attention on the problems of learning to teach from experience alone, without the benefit of the frameworks, vocabulary, or assumptions embedded within teacher education. While subject-matter knowledge, good character, and the inclination to teach are important characteristics of beginning teachers, they do not necessarily lead to a pedagogical understanding of subject matter nor to a theoretical understanding of how students learn a particular subject". (24)

Research along similar lines leads Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Margret Buchmann from Michigan State University to the following conclusion in an article in "Journal of Curriculum Studies", 1988:

"...while teaching is, in some sense, an everyday activity, thinking pedagogically is not natural. The transition to professional thinking in teaching marks a

divide - a move in which future teachers learn to look beyond the familiar worlds o teaching and learning. The pull of prior beliefs is strong, however, not least because of the long apprenticeship of observation that distinguishes teachers from other professionals".

"Thus, in becoming a teacher, very little normatively correc learning can be trusted to come about without instruction that takes the preconceptions of future teachers into account, preconceptions that are warranted by common sense and the conventional practice that future teachers are already steeped in. In learning to teach, neither first hand experience, nor university instruction can be left to work themselves out by themselves. Without help in examining current beliefs and assumptions, teacher candidates are likely to maintain conventional beliefs and incorporate new information or puzzling experiences into old frameworks. Our thesis has implications for the charge that teachers are conservative and individualistic. The lack of explicit teaching in teacher education, not unalterable facts about teachers, may explain these features of teacher thinking." (25)

As Deborah Meier remarks:

"In short, we have come to be teachers knowing all about teaching. We have been exposed of more teaching and teachers than to any other single phenomenon. Most of us have spent more time with teachers than with our parents". (26)

A beginning effort

Pamela Grossmann calls her research "a beginning effort" in the area of conceptualisation of the relationship between professional knowledge and professional preparation for teachers. The above-mentioned study by Feiman-Nemser and Buchman and other studies show that research of this type began to spread in the early eighties.

Many of these researchers are working in one or other form of teacher-education institutions and the attempts to de-professionalize teacher education and teachers' work in the schools can very well be one of the spurs to encouragement of these studies. As the two Canadian researchers, D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly say about Donald Shön's two books: "The reflective practitioner, how professionals think in action." (1983) and "Educating the reflective practitioner (1987):

"But the explanation of why his rhetorical influence in education is out of all proportion to his argument's substance can be explained narratively. Shön

makes it possible for many of us to tell the story of teacher education in a way that runs counter to the technical teacher education we are encouraged to sponsor and study, and he makes it possible for the story to legitimate our professional memory of reflective practice". (27)

Naturally this can be an explanation, but there can be other causes for the impact of Donald Schön's ideas, namely, the development of educational psychology. Deanna Kuhm writes:

"As noted earlier, cognitive psychologists in the last several years have shown a surge of interest in the analysis of school tasks, giving rise to a whole new source of interest in the analysis of school tasks, leading to a whole new field known as instructional psychology". (28)

A fruitful idea

Much of this research still lies ahead, but:

"we are beginning to have a much clearer and potentiall more fruitful idea of what that work is. Such work is compatible with a view of thinking skills as emerging in specific contexts, to which they are initially wedded, and gradually, by means of exercise, increasing in strength and in generality. What might a programme of research associated with this look like?" (29)

But in regard to this growing effort to professionalise teaching, a word of caution may be added. Teacher professionalization is not to be compared with that of professionalization of medical practitioners.

David F. Labaree has these remarks on the situation:

" The frequent use of medical analogies becomes particularly problematic at this stage of the discussion. The implication is that laypersons should have no more say in how a teacher conducts a class than in how a surgeon conducts an operation; both cases are seen as technical matters of professional competence that are best dealt with by peer review. But it is not clear that shaping minds, instilling values, and preparing citizens are the same sorts of technical problems as removing an appendix or reducing a fever. The former tasks have an irreducible political character to them—since they involve the teacher in making choices about which ideas, values, and social ends are worth promoting and since they exert an impact on the way students will make their own choices about these things. Every parent—and more broadly every citizen—is constantly making these kinds of decisions and exerting these sorts of influences on

their own children and on the adults around them. Therefore this political component of teaching is not a closely held form of professional expertise but a capacity that is universally accessible to the lay public, and this makes the construction of professional barriers to public influence over classroom instruction nothing less than a threat to an essential component of democracy." (30)

Teacher education must therefore always have an ethical dimension, thus expressed by Pamela Grossman:

> If our goal is not helping prospective teachers to attain immediate mastery of classroom routines but preparing prospective teachers to ask worthwhile questions of their teaching, to continue to learn from their practice, to adopt innovative models o instruction, and to face the ethical dimensions of classroom teaching, then we must place our emphasis elsewhere. Research suggests that teacher education can provide frameworks for thinking about the teaching of subject matter that can influence what teachers will later learn from classroom experience. Teacher education can also help raise the questions regarding ethical and moral issues that will not necessarily arise from experience alone but which will frame how prospective teachers think about and continue to learn from their work in classrooms. I do not believe that prospective teachers are incapable of this challenge. Just as classroom teachers are learning to regard their students as thinkers, so must teacher educators learn to honour the capacities of their students as pedagogically critical thinkers. Just as the thinking curriculum of the future promises to weave together skills and content, so the teacher education curriculum must integrate management skills with substantive and ethical concerns. (31)

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Appropriate Developmental Early Childhood Education

Dr. David P. Weikart

David Weikart was invited to speak at the conference because he represents the High/Scope philosophy, a coherent approach to education and care, looking at young children from an appropriate developmental view with a clear focus on child initiated activities.
The High/Scope program has been followed by longitudinal studies which have proved that high quality in early childhood education pays, not only from a human point of view but also from an economic point of view.

PH.D. David Weikart, born in 1931 in USA, first worked as a director of the Ypsilanti Public Schools' Special Services. Since 1970 he has been president of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation where overall planning and development are his main tasks.This includes research supporting the investment of large public sums into high quality early childhood programs, the development of appropriate curricula and policy initiatives and the training of professionals. The High/Scope Foundation is actively seeking partners in foreign countries to establish cooperating centers.

This morning's presentation is a series of events I want you to experience and think about. I want to do several things:

1. I want to talk about a *model* for thinking about early childhood care and education.
2. I want to take you on a field trip this morning to Cali, Colombia, to look at some children who are experiencing a *directive curriculum* in a nutrition and education program. And I would like to show them to you, 6 months later, to see the difference that the *new curriculum* makes.
3. Then, I would like to talk about *research on different curricula*. I would like to show you what happens to children experiencing different kinds of programs. We will look at results 10 years later to see if there is a long-term impact on different approaches.
4. Finally, I would like to talk about some of the *key elements* that I think are

important for any high-quality program. With your permission, I will use the *High/Scope* approach program as an illustration.

5. I would like to close with some comments about *why* I think *early education works*.

Some opening comments:

As a grandfather, I would like to tell a "grandfather story" about 16-month-old Steven, second son of my oldest daughter.

> Steven, has just a few words. He has a word for "yes," which is "ya" and one for "more," which is "mo" and, of course, he has words for Mom and Dad.
>
> The other day, I took care of him, and tried to practice what I preach both by the way of question style and of interacting. While caring for him, I took Steven on my lap and sang a song for him, "Ah, poor bird, take your flight, far above the shadows of this poor night." Steven looked at me, "Mo." So I repeated the song, maybe in another key. He looked and laughed and said, "Mo." After about ten repetitions, I thought I would sing something different. I tried, "John, come kiss me now...," "No!"

While he didn't understand the words, he knew an old English madrigal wasn't what he was asking for.

I am sure, you all have similar experience with your own children.

The point is that parents, teachers, caregivers, whoever we are, working with young children, we may have opportunity in the future to really invest in unknown technologies that are somehow yet to be discovered. But, now we have to organize and present an effective approach to a child, be we a parent or caregiver. Steven's response to the music, discerning the different melodies and making his choice as to which he wanted – being able to tell within a few notes which melody is preferred is fairly simple at that age. Lots of children can do that, but he was included in education as a process. How do we go about it? How do we do it? What is the best way? That is what I want to talk about today.

A model

I would like to show you a model. I would like to propose a simple way of thinking about educational programs.

Here is what I suggest:

CHILD / STAFF	low initiative	high initiative
high initiative	**A**	**B**
low initiative	**C**	**D**

Can you imagine what a staff member would be like with high initiative and working with a group of children? For example – where would the staff member stand? At the blackboard? In front of the class Among the children? She would be standing up in order to be commanding. That would be an example of what I am doing now. I am in a high-initiative position and you are in a low initiative position.

When there is a program in *Quadrant A*, it is a style which is common in American classrooms, frequently found in standard public schools. The job of the teacher is to organize the material and get the child to respond. And frequently people who work within Quadrant A work with *stimulus-response theory* as a basis for organizing their teaching. They give rewards like small gold stars or other items for doing the right thing. But, the *key issue is the transmission of knowledge*. It is from the teacher (or the materials) to the child. The job of the child is to focus himself/herself to be prepared to receive that knowledge.

When we come to *Quadrant D* in the lower righthand side, we ask the child to show some initiative, and take responsibility for what is happening in the classroom. We ask the *teacher to be observant, supportive, aware*, but not to take initiative.

I would place many Danish classes that I have visited in this quadrant (D). The children are playing, the teacher is on the side of the classroom. One classroom I visited, the teachers were doing needlepoint. Actually they were making small napkins. From my observation that teacher-child relationship occurred most of the day. They did needlepoint with the children at liberty for free play. As I said, teachers, if you can find them, are at the side of the room, or in good programs – observing children, prepared to assist if they can. In programs in Quadrant D that are having

Klara: My father works on TV news.

difficulty, you find them ignoring the children, doing their own things, or they might even be out in another room drinking coffee and not attending to the children at all.

You can frequently see *Quadrant C* in third-world countries, or in a typical daycare home, where the mother/daycare worker goes about her business of serving the children, feeding, diapering, clothing, but *not paying attention.* The children are simply passive, waiting, perhaps watching TV. In a program I visited in Colombia, the 125 children were brought to school, diapered and washed and set up against the wall for a two- or three-hour period until it was time again to diaper, feed or wash.

The normal pattern of programs is to fall somewhere along an *axis* through Quadrants A to D. For a time, a program leaves children on their own to play and teachers not working with the children. Suddenly the teacher says, "Oh, let's go for a walk." The teacher introduces the task that the child is going to undertake. She brings the children with her and says, "Everybody, line up" or "Let's go,", or "Let's do this." She is in control. It can be done with a variety of strategies.

In Quadrant A portion of the program the teacher is in charge, the child receives. In the Quadrant D portion, the child is active and the teacher waits to receive or to support in some way.

Quadrant B programs are perhaps the *most interesting and the most difficult.* Here, the teachers take *high initiative* but take it *in cooperation with* high initiative from *the child.* Historically, these programs did not exist. It was not one of the strands or patterns of historic, early-childhood education.

Quadrant B requires *meshing of the interests.* If we take this pattern of working, the model differs from the way we normally think about early-childhood care and education. Because we normally think of programs as structured to unstructured, from controlled to free and along the A - D axis. In Quadrant B, teachers understand child development and work from the interests of the child. The task is to support the children in their play. The *children* are highly active, and they are the ones to *introduce content.* The children work as equals with the teacher.

There are three styles of programs. There are programs (Quadrant A) that are directive, knowledge bound, giving information, right answers, right notions. There are programs (Quadrant D) that allow the children to grow, develop, mature at their own stage, without much adult involvement. There are programs (Quadrant B) developed from both a theoretical and practice perspective that are quite different in the way they operate.

Cali, Colombia

Now, I would like to take you on a brief journey to Cali, Colombia, to look at two of these programs.

Cali, is the second major city in Colombia. It is also a drug trade center. The country is desperately poor. The children in the barrios live in extraordinarily poor circumstances. Dr. Sinnistera developed a product called Colombia Rena, which is a mixture of soya and fishmeal, as a way of giving basic protein to the children. He felt this would also help the intellectual development of the children. This project was to test that idea by offering feeding and education.

On the *first visit* we are going to look at a program based on Quadrant A where the teachers felt that what children from the barrios and very deprived backgrounds needed, was academic knowledge. They had to be controlled, fed, disciplined,

taught. They *then* converted this program to a *High/Scope curriculum* approach (Quadrant B). The teachers worked with developmental theory, allowing the children space and time, and where they provided adult-child support strategies of various types.

I would like to show you those two sets now.

The teachers were young women who were selected from the community. They had at least a third grade education. They were not anywhere near the quality of trained staff that you would expect but they were extremely well supervised. You will hear me say a lot of times "The key to a high-quality program, regardless of the training of the staff, is the quality and continuity of supervision."

Picture 1: The young lad is simply an onlooker. The program here focused on teaching things teachers thought the children needed. Here, colours green, red. The test, I often use, is watching the hands. Who's hands are active?
The kids are anxious to learn. They want to do it. But the boy waits, with his hand on two of the colours, they are rehearsing. He simply waits for the teacher to tell him which one. So, he observes.

Picture 2: When given the opportunity to work, here, to trace the outline of the house, with clay that has been rolled, you can, again, see who is doing the work. The child's hand is not only passive, it is flat on the table. The teacher's hand is active.

Picture 3: A writing task for 3-year-olds! Notice the hand on the pencil.
The girl is supposed to color the apple. You can see that she is willing to do it, but, like the boy with the two blocks. Why?

Picture 4: A reading task. Again, the question of the hands – held flat and motionless.

Picture 5: The capacity to cooperate, or the willingness to respond is best expressed in this picture, where the group is trying to do some gross motor activities. The teachers are busy organizing the children, in order to do the right kind of exercises. Notice the kids – legs are straight, they are not moving, not much is happening.

Picture 6: In a music class, I found the body posture interesting. The children are willing to cooperate, but the boy is standing flat against the wall. This was an interesting finding, because he seemed to move out of the line of fire by getting as far out as he could.

Picture 7: Getting ready to wash. I am impressed by the care. I assume that you would regard this situation as very good in this kind of program because the kids are so orderly. They are all in line, their hands are on shoulders the way they are supposed to be waiting to get washed.

Now, this is a nutrition program. The problem of the girl in the center of the line is not that she is overweight, she is bloated from lack of proper diet. You can see the light color of the hair. That is caused by the protein deficiency. The teachers have a problem in counselling the parents in the program. As the children get fed, the hair turns dark. That is not valued by the parents; light colored hair is of higher value to the parents.

Picture 8 and 9: This is a very supportive program. There is a lot of attention given. A health program – here, skin disease. A protein supplement is given. Nutritious food – red beans and rice.

Picture 10: The children rest 45 minutes in the afternoon. At each mattress, a toy was put, but there was no relationship between the toy and the child's interest. Here you have, again, the teachers' selection.

Picture 11: To me, this picture is very important. If you drew a graph of the eyes of the children, you would find that no child is looking at another child. There is no interaction among them.

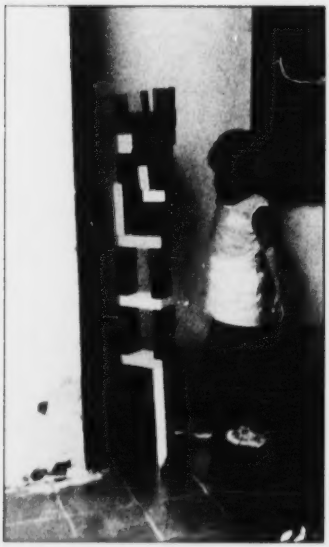
You can often see these kinds of children's eyes in programs in third-world countries where children are being dominated and where nutrition is a problem. The eyes look so appealing, because they are so big. They look pleasant at first sight. But if you look closely, you see a passive cooperation, not an active involvement.

Picture 12: After lunch, the group goes for a walk. I am sure this does not happen in Denmark with the children walking along and the staff at the back, chatting.

Now, at my request, the teachers are convinced to permit unsupervised choice by children as to what they want to do. A half-hour of *free play* in the usual sense of the word – that is, I asked them to let the children play with what they wish. The teachers were quite concerned that the children would run wild and they would be unable to do anything to control the situation. Furthermore, the teachers were afraid that the children would try to do something that they would be unable to do and feel defeated, feel injured.

Picture 13: Here is Amanda, "ironing" a piece of cloth. In front of her are a toy doll cook, a toy cookstove, and pots of "rice" that she has organized. She is making a house. The teachers are amazed. They did not feel that the children could do such things because they are so deprived.

Picture 14: These girls have made these elaborate stacks of blocks. Again, the tragedy is that those boys sitting in back have been at it for the same amount of time. All they have done is stack a couple of blocks which is very immature for their age.



Picture 15: Eloise is the queen of the day. She has made this huge tower taller than herself. If I owe anything to anyone in Colombia as to why the decision was made to make a shift to the High/Scope program, it is to Eloise. The teachers could not get over her tower. The size, its complexity, and the fact that it stayed up. You can see her pride.

Picture 16: A group of kids. The new ideas seem to be promising, but where is the program to support them?

We have now gone 6 months ahead. We are looking at a program with the same children, but a different philosophy based on the *High/Scope curriculum, a Quadrant B approach.* We are now working with a program where the teachers try to work with a developmental theory, rather than just be directive. The children have also had 6 months of better nutrition.

Picture 17: This lad has a wheel quoit in his hand, using it as a pretend steering wheel for a large truck. He is making noise and moving around.
Again, for you this is not surprising. But for these teachers it was quite a shift – permitting physical activity of the child's own choosing.

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Picture 18: The girl who was holding the pencil to color the paper before – I would like you to see her 6 months later – quite a young lady now!

Picture 19: Opportunity to play, climb, work through. Given the opportunity to be active and to carry out their own intentions. Here, the children have made these flower pots out of old oil cans which the teachers introduced to grow plants in. See, now, the active hands, for a measure of what is going on. I also love the boy's expression here, his intention to do the job.

Picture 20: The teachers, in what I regard as an extraordinary sacrifice, have brought sand in and dumped it on the floor. Remember, there are no cleaners here. These people do all the cleaning themselves. So, the teachers brought the material. They know they have to clean up afterwards. Look at the extent of the individual activity of the children.

Picture 21: Important now – remember, before, you always saw the teacher standing. Now, they are beginning the process of coming down to the child's level in a role of a good teacher – getting down to eye level. Here, she is holding sand, but who's hands are active? The children are putting the sand into her hands.

Picture 22: This is Claudia Fernandez. She is undressing her doll, because she is going to wash the clothes.

Picture 23 and 24: This is where her mother washes the clothes. A cement abutment with the water running through, down the irrigation ditch. The women work here, to pound out the clothes. They put them on the barbed wire or lay them flat on the ground to dry. Claudia, after she undresses the dolls, makes the same kind of cement abutment of blocks. She has the "rock" that her mother works on, she makes the noise "Shhh..." with her mouth. She washes her dolls clothes up and down the rock and then puts them aside to dry.

This intellectual process of representation is precisely what we are after in children; their efforts to integrate their own experience with what the world around them does.

I have seen the same practice in New York City.

> After children undressed their dolls, they go over with the clothes to a large cardboard box on the side of the room. They open up the top of the box. They turn the clothes in and put "50 cents" into the slot. They sit and wait for the clothes to wash, they chat and talk, and then they open up the box, take the clothes out, they put them in the dryer, and put in "25 cents." When they have dried for an appropriate moment or two, they take them out, fold them and take them back.

It is a representation just as Claudia Fernandez did in Colombia.

Picture 25: Here is a mixed tea party. Daniel, by himself – the girl, more sophisticated, has brought a guest doll.

Picture 26: Again, I want to focus on the change in the role of the teacher. I think you can see the face of the lad and his eye contact with the adult. His interest, her involvement, stopping her chores with the mop and focusing on the boy.

Picture 27: A music session. Remember the movement that you saw while the program was still quite teacher-directed. I do not see kids against the wall anymore. More kids are participating.

Picture 28: Here, kids working with size. Before, the children had to put three pegs in a holder. Now, they can make their small, medium, large clayballs /- any size that they want. You can see the different sizes in the row on the shelf.

Picture 29: Girls working with trucks and toys. Finally, cooperation to repair and fix as they work.

Picture 30: The line-up to get washed. Now, again, notice the interaction, the social complexity of it. Even a pair of lads fighting which never occurred before. But, now, it is not a problem for the adults.

Picture 31: A little mischief, trying to ring the school bell with their brooms as the teachers begin to incorporate the children in the cleanup. This is not the teachers' cleanup while the children wait.

Picture 32: A line of children, again, of the same snack time. Notice, how the pairs and groups of kids are interacting. What a difference from the way they did before the change in program!

If we look at this type of classroom operation, we find, that there have been two types of programs. The first was Quadrant A, a fairly directive, managed program. The second one was in Quadrant B, or at least beginning to be in Quadrant B, where the teachers try to make things more open, more active, more child initiated.

Effective program styles

Is it possible, that one style program is more effective than another? There are those people, who say that the job of early education and child rearing is to get the children ready for formal academics, who say that the more formal you are – the more ready will the children be. And since we know the children have to know math, reading, and science, the most important things we can do is to teach them math, reading, and science. Is there any evidence to support this approach of Quadrant A?

We have our opinions, we have our commitment, but is there much evidence?

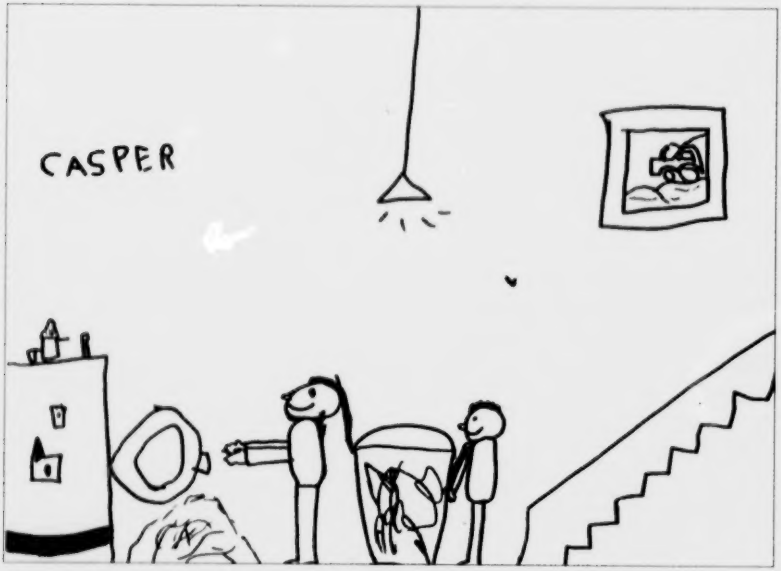
I want to speak briefly about a small *research project* High/Scope has conducted for the last 20 years, looking at children in three model programs, operated to a high standard in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the High/Scope Curriculum Comparison Project. The programs had random assignment of children to one of the three groups. The children participated in the programs for a two-year period. Then we followed them, up to the age of 15 – the most recent data are from age-22 interviews.

The *basic finding* from the study is that each of the groups perform equally well on academic measures as we trace them through school. Interesting – two years of preparation (a Quadrant A approach) for reading and math did not improve the reading or math scores any more than the youngsters who went through a traditional or High/Scope preschool program (Quadrants D or B).

A second finding, perhaps much more important, and much more serious to programs that try to train children on academic content, is, we found as these children grew up, the group in Quadrant A had an average of 13 reported delinquencies by age 15. The group in the traditional program reported an average of 6. The group in the High/Scope program reported an average of 5.

The interesting thing about this finding is that children who come through programs at ages 3-4, which are directive in nature (follow the magic finger, give the name of this letter, or 1 + 1 = 2 so what is 2 + 2?), do not obtain as much *social competence* as children who come through the other two child-initiated systems.

Since there is no academic advantage for children in the direct-instruction system, why use it at all? From my perspective, the people who propose to use academic, teacher-directed, child-follow-the-lead-programs, now have the burden of proof. They must prove that the program does NOT harm the children. Because there are data from High/Scope and several other studies that suggest that it is problematic to use such programs, we need new reasons to do so. If we go back to E. Erickson's point of view, "What is the task of a 2, 3, 4, and 5-year-old?" It is to develop a sense of responsibility, a sense of initiative, and a sense of trust. These do not appear to be gained in those direct instruction programs.



Casper: Mum is at the laundry.

This finding is further supported by the fact that one-third of the children in the direct instruction program, at age 15, say that their parents think they are doing poorly in life. None of the children in the other two groups say that their parents think they are doing poorly.

Furthermore, in school one-third of each of the traditional and High/Scope groups have leadership positions, played sports, been involved in special school activities,

None of the direct instruction group are that involved. Suggesting, then, that the child in the direct instruction group is alienated from society, from the home and from the school.

When we analyze age-22 data this year for these groups, we think we are going to find this group to be seriously criminal in its relationship to society. While the children from all groups will have problems, because they are from a problem-prone strata of society, but we will see a much superior adjustment in their relationship to society.

What I want to say is that successful programs use high child-initiative, or as we often say, *child-directed learning, child choice, child planning.* All these processes are the ones we should be working and experimenting with.

Now, listening to Ingrid Pramling's questioning style, her speech suggested to me things I can use in my style of program. I hope that some of the things that High/Scope does can inform some of you working on curriculum representing the style in Quadrant B.

I do not have a lot of sympathy with programs in Quadrants A and D. Programs that say: Oh, yes, we are free play programs, and then say, We are going to have a festival, everybody get organized! Or programs where the teachers say, "We have a lot of free play in the program because we believe in child-initiated learning," but then fail to support the child with the kind of knowledge, skills, and ability that adults can supply.

The *main difference* between Quadrant A and B, is that teachers or the staff in Quadrant B work with a *developmental-theory orientation* as to what should be happening next. In my story about Steven, his recognition of the melody of the music is what I would build on, developmentally.

In Quadrant D, the process tends to be more intuitive – let's have fun – kids enjoying themselves. But the rationale is not of a developmental nature.

Remember, I approve of programs in both B and D quadrants. I am not saying there is only one way, or that we have to work hard to find the RIGHT solution. But, I am saying, that programs that concentrate in Quadrant D may limit the extent development of children. Finally, I am saying that I have a lot of questions and problems with programs that run up and down the axis from Quadrants A and D – that style represents an approach.

The High/Scope curriculum method

I would like to organize the presentation of the High/Scope curriculum method from the prospective of *five issues*.

Stage theory.

I feel that working in Quadrant B with a High/Scope perspective means that I am committed to a stage-theory of approach to young children. In our case, we use Piaget as a basic stage theorist, but you might use others.

The key thing about stages is that there is guidance as to appropriate activities reflecting the *patterns of thought for given ages*. It is possible to identify the style of learning, the style of thinking, and the characteristics of the child at each level. For the preoperational child, in Piaget's terms from 2-1/2- to 6-years-old, there are certain characteristics of the young child that we think we can build on. Because my goal in working with children of this age is not to prepare them to be successful in academics at school – it is NOT my intention, my intention is that they be the BEST 4-year-olds they possibly can be, the most imaginative, the most problem-solving, the most initiating, the most thoughtful, the most socially aware, that is possible for that age. But NOT to rehearse them to be 7- to 8-year-olds which represents a different style of thinking and ability.

For example, a 7, 8, 9, or 9, 10-year-old child is well able to understand causality, can understand reversibility, can think almost in an adult style. Therefore, the kind of teaching, the arrangement of the classroom, the process at that level can be quite different – and should be different from what they are for 3, 4, 5-year-olds. So, for me, the stage theory is an *important tool in thinking about curriculum*.

When we approach training teachers, we begin with *room arrangement*. We feel that the organization of the classroom, or the setting in which the child works, is absolutely critical for giving the child a sense of power. This means that the room is the child's and not the staff's. Often, when we look at schools in America, we find that they are organized for the convenience of the staff.

We believe, as you do, in work areas about the room, as block area, dramatic area, housekeeping area. What we like, basically, is a large block area, small toy area, a cooking/housekeeping area. We like an area where music instruments can be stored and we like an area for books and lots of art materials. We also, increasingly, put a minimum of three computers in our classrooms.

The main thing that probably is different in a High/Scope classroom is that everything is labelled. Every item has either a pictograph or actual written word or a pattern or some sort of symbol or sign. The reason for the labelling is that the children are responsible for getting the materials they wish to use from the supplies. And, they are responsible for returning it.

You have to help as adults, of course, but it is primarily the responsibility of the children. Our teachers do not get things for kids. Our answer is always, "Have you looked in the area where it is supposed to be?" or, "Can you find that on the work table?" Or, "I think I see it over there." Some indirect, indefinite statement encouraging the child to get it, and indicating that it is in a logical storage or work space.

> We were working with a class in Britain some years ago. All the child materials were on the upper, open shelves of the closets. All the teacher materials were at the bottom of the closets with closed doors. Here, we had the teachers' materials where the children could reach and children's materials where only the teachers could reach. Can you imagine the program they ran? The burden on staff? The impact on child choice and control?
>
> They did not run a child-centered program nor a teacher-directed program, but an adult exercise program! Up, down. Up, down. Why would teachers or staff put themselves through that?
>
> They all came in one weekend, brought a carpenter and turned all the cabinets upside down, put the closets on top and the shelves at the bottom. The first thing the teachers said, after a week, was, "I don't know what to do anymore, I don't have anything to do." Of course, then it was easier to start training them for the things they should do.

So, classroom arrangement and labelling is very important for us.

Daily routine

The second issue that is important to us is the daily routine. We feel that just as the children need to "own" the classroom independently by access and use of work materials, so the routine and the schedule of the day, also, needs to be consistent. When children come in, THEY know what the time schedule is. There is not a, "Well, the teacher will tell me," philosophy.

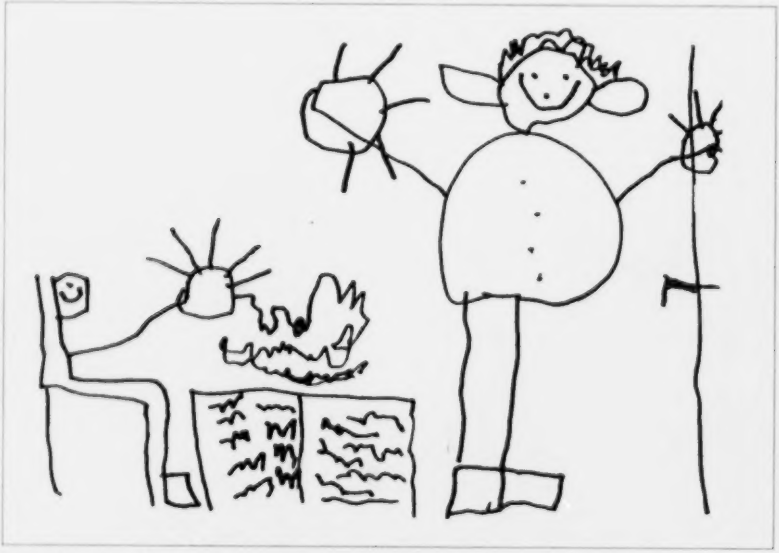
> I was going home once after a consultation day in Milwaukee with the director of a large preschool program. We talked about this issue and she said, "My son

is a very brilliant kindergartner. He really is in charge of what is happening in the classroom." I doubted that was true We picked up her son after school. On the way to the airport I engaged him in a conversation. We got around to, "What did you do today?" And he said, "Nothing." "Well, what are you going to do tomorrow?" "I don't know, the teacher will tell me."

So much for talent and independence.

Those are not comments from a kid that owns the classroom, or who owns the schedule. Because when you ask any child what he has done today, he should be able to tell you what he did today. And if you ask about tomorrow, he should be able to say what his intention is, because it is HIS schedule, it is HIS workplace.

At High/Scope we employ what we call the *plan-do-review cycle*. We ask children in small groups to plan what they are going to do. For a 3-year-old it may be a very simple process of pointing to an area or toy. But, gradually children develop to where they actually come in with plans, full of ideas of what they want to accomplish that day.



Grandma watches me play with pipe cleaners.

> Again, a grandfather story. I drive with my 4-year-old grandson to school every day – the High/Scope preschool. Sometimes I ask for his plan for the day. The other day he said, "Well, this week Mike and I are working on crashdummies." "Crashdummies?" "Yeah, you know, these dummies in the cars that bang into the walls." "What are you doing with the crashdummies?" "Well, we were making big ones but they broke apart too easily. So now we are only making little ones because, then, we can make little cars and they can go really fast."

Their teacher must have a lot of tolerance!

The point was, he had a plan, he had size, he had sequence, he had rationale for what he was doing. And at 4, he also had something that a boy is really interested in, crashing those little homemade cars with those little homemade dummies into the wall to test them. That is what you want You want ownership, the planning. The doing, obviously, is worktime as we call it.

Finally, we have a review period where the teacher asks, "Well, how did it work with the crashdummies today? What did you find out? Could you tell me about it? How did you make them?" These questions focus the children on a mental review of what has happened. For us, the Plan-do-review cycle is extraordinarily important, in not only giving the child ownership of the classroom, the schedule, but also the intellectual ownership of their own activities. They originated it, so they are involved in what is involved.

Adult support.

The third issue is, that we are very anxious to improve adult support for young children. By that we mean the way in which adults move physically and the language the adult uses to support children.

The simplest way to state it is, that we feel *teachers should rarely ask children any question that the teacher or the adult already knows the answer.* If you know the answer, why are you asking? Of course, there are cases when you must do that. But, "How did you make that?" Or, "Could you show me how to do it?" Or, "What are you going to do with that next?" is this style we encourage. One teacher had this experience:

> "Hey, I have got a horse and I want to go into your barn. I can't find the door. How am I going to get in?" And the child answers, "Oh, it is a magic horse, she just flies into the top."

That was the solution to the problem the teacher did not expect. Who would have thought that the child was working with magic horses and cows so they did not need a doorwa They could just fly in. So, you take things where they are.The task is support of learning. We feel that teachers need to extend children's work.

> One teacher noticed a young girl in the housekeeping area. She rolled out pretend pizzas. She put different objects, like pine cones, stones, and bottlecaps on it. She offered the teacher a piece. The teacher: "Ummmmmm, oh, this is so delicious. Nicole, can you give me the recipe?" The 4-year-old went over to the art area, got a piece of paper and a pencil and made, scribbled, 4 lines across it. "Oh", said the teacher, "I'm so glad you gave this to me. My kids at home would really like your pizza, but, you know, to make sure I got it right, could you read it for me?" So, Nicole took the note and read, "Flour, pepperoni, cheese, pizza." "Oh, Nicole, thank you so much."

The point is, the teacher neither intruded on her play, nor did she alter it, but she abstracted information from it, things for her and supported Nicole's growing interest in writing.

Key Experiences.

The next issue is that we employ a concept of Key Experiences. These are the main conceptual abilities that children must master in order to achieve full, broad, social, and intellectual growth. We focus on concepts such as language, space, time, classification – also movement, music, and added to it, art.

These Key Experiences are the *framework* with which the *teachers observe the child*. To see the process of the child by using Key Experiences, adults can work within a framework to support the child.

> The other day, there was a boy with a truck. He put a rubber band on the truck. He was holding the truck up and spinning it. Now, at one level that is very primitive. Was he just working with these as objects? But no, he was counting the number of turns that the spin of the rubber band gave to the truck.

So, he was obviously at a much higher level of development. In this case, he was reflecting Number Key Experiences. The teacher knew that is about as high as you can go at that age and she just left it. Had he been working just with the truck, just watching the thing turn, she would have thought about it in some other way. She would have suggested other things that he might spin to gradually support some observations about objects that spin.

Assessment.

Fifth, we come to assessment which we feel is critica I want to return to the chart. From High/Scope's perspective we feel there are three types of assessment procedures in practice today.

In America, we have tests like the California Test of Basic Skills. And, indeed, if you want to test a Direct Instruction group, Quadrant A, on their knowledge of trigonometry, that would be the kind of test I would want. But for young children, probably through the age of 8 or 9, *tests of knowledge* of this nature are not important.

As a matter of fact, if you will forgive me, knowledge itself is not important. What do 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8-year-old kids learn that 13, 14, 15, 16-year-olds do not know? And what they know they did not learn at 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8. The standardized tests are very good for specific knowledge, particularly for kids above ll years-of-age, or for groups of adults If I am going to be an engineer, there is a body of knowledge that I have to know. I cannot invent it. This information has to be learned and can be tested.

Quadrant B offers another style of testing. Using developmental theory, let us organize it into a series of steps. And let us have teachers, who are working with the children, be aware of those steps or stages by observing the children (and systematically) over the weeks, make some notes about what the children have done, put that against the scales developed and do an assessment. So, High/Scope has developed the *High/Scope Classroom Observation Record,* which is a summary of child behavior on these developmental stages.

The children never know they have been tested. The teacher does not ever test the child. But through the work and progress, through the days, these

Martin: I am strong.

skills become evident. We find, for example, that a teacher can keep good records on about 20 children by making about 8 single, factual, direct observations in a given day. So, it is not a burdensome procedure. It takes no classtime and it does not remove the child from the classroom process.

There are *three styles of assessment and there are three kinds of programs*. I would like to enlist your interest in systematic, factual observation of young children by whatever system you are using instead of either testing the children one at a time, or simply collecting products or outcomes.

Closing comments: Why does early childhood education work?

The fascinating thing is that when I started in 1960 with the planning for early childhood education, the work I was doing with adolescents suggested that the schools had to change. I could take a poor, adolescent girl and write out her diagnostic performance scale on a test before I saw her simply by knowing her street address. When you can do that, you stop being a psychologist. You start being something else. In my case, I said we must reach these children before they come to school because they seem intractable once they get there. So, I thought it was information and knowledge that they did not have. So I developed the cognitively-oriented curriculum which was used in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. This curriculum was created as a way of trying to develop the knowledge base in children. It was specifically called cognitive because I was acting in response to the social-developmental approaches which were the alternatives in the few preschools that were around at that time.

But what I have learned over time is that the real outcome of preschool programs is social competence but not knowledge.

However, the dilemma is that you cannot teach social competence directly. You have to do it THROUGH the problem solving processes that go on in children's play. And so, it is an interesting challenge that you cannot teach what you want to teach. You have to allow the circle to close on its own behalf.

So, what we employ are *three key processes*.

First, we support the children in *creating intentions or plans* for their work. If it is in a music session, you let the children lead. If it is in a movement session, you say,

"Well, how else should we do it?" If it is an individual child making their determination to play with the blocks – whatever it is, the child's own intention or plan is critical.

Second, the child has to have experiences. We argue very strongly that the *kinds of experiences* the children need are not just with materials but with other people, with ideas, and with events like field trips, occasions, places to go. It needs to be something they can experience directly and solve and involve themselves.

Third, they need *opportunity to reflect* on the experiences. It might be scribble writing a recipe to remember there are parts and pieces to what they d It might be crash-dummies sizes. No matter what they do, they gain some insight. We think what comes out of this three-part process is what early education is about. It creates the basis of future success.

I invite you to think about these issues. I invite you to think about the processes that are involved in this whole story.

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The Experience Of Reggio Emilia

A Place where Adults and Children Learn Together

Tiziana Filippini

Tiziana Filippini is a person who has been a tremendous inspiration to teachers from many countries.
"The hundred languages of children" is Reggio Emilia's approach to early childhood education. This means that children should have the opportunity to experiment and play in a developmentally appropriate setting that allows them to choose what is important for them. It is also important to give children a feeling of being an important and valuable part of society.

Tiziana Filippini was born in Reggio Emilia, Italy, in 1953. She got her master's degree in psychology at the University of Padova and has since worked as pedagogical adviser in the team of guides at the Administration for Child Care Facilities in the municipality of Reggio Emilia, where she also is responsible for external relations.

As the last speaker I ask you to consider a matter that may seem far from our subject, but nevertheless is closely related to its development and quality. This is certainly not a meeting for either politicians or economists, but we cannot avoid meditating on the fact that the political and economic situation in Italy, Europe, and probably the rest of the planet as well, is becoming more intricate each day. Europe is currently drawing a new map. New borders are being drawn, and each nation is looking for its identity in an attempt to respond to both old and new problems. Italy is going through a serious economic crisis. The social balance is interrupted in all vital respects such as the public sector, health care, education, the retirement system, etc. The population's needs are increasing, new needs are developing while the resources are limited or poorly distributed. It is necessary to choose. The problem is the relationship between the quality of the responses we can offer, and the quantity of them.

It is also becoming increasingly important to consider the relationship between the private and public sector. Everywhere political decisions are leaving the children and families to themselves, instead of protecting them.

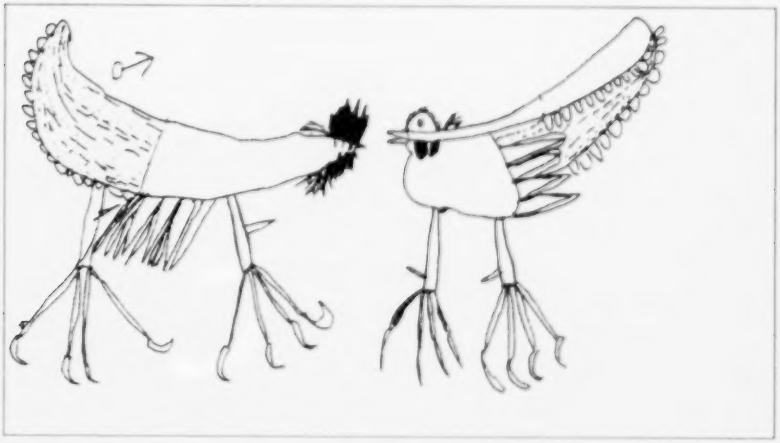
In most countries, disturbing results can be found at all levels in the educational system. In Italy, with a public education system which is centralized and mandatory from the age of 6 to 14, of each 100 pupils who start in school, only 46 pass the finals. Of those, only 28 enrol in universities, but only 7 complete their studies. A lot of people get lost in the process, and we could not even dream of the possibility of compensation for this loss by quality of content or the education that becomes the final product.

The school - and here the discussion could evolve drastically - produces a person whose primary objective is to be able to function in society, not to be able to live. It suppresses the education of the individual, the ego, as an ethical and social heritage. It is thus an enormous waste of time, and also a waste of intelligence, of talent, and of humanity; without counting the waste of time that is a part of the first years of human life, where the person is entrusted to a day-care system that is viewed as if it did not possess any cultural value of its own, but is merely characterized as a supportive intervention; rarely perceived as an investment in the later educational process and the individual's own personal growth. If we made a list of the various existing perceptions of the child we would see much rhetoric. But primarily we would see the child viewed as a being that has a need for emotional contact, for help, for attention. It is a view that has become impoverished and hackneyed, where the little child is defined by the things it does not have, by the things it needs. A child defined on a negative basis. A child that primarily has needs and not rights. Some might argue though that through the years, psychological science has produced a perception of the child as an individual who is competent from birth.

Limitations or possibilities?

It has become common to speak about the rights of children, and even to write down the rights of children, as if they were some sort of basic law. But do not be misled. It is true that some schools of thought in psychology refer to the child as competent from birth; and among the experts and those who participate in congresses, and in publishing, this view is the most predominant.
But it is just as true that in normal practical pedagogics and social practice, this view is not accepted. The point I am making here is that the distance between theory and practice is very great, and that it is in practice that the child's destiny is determined.

How many institutions, how many teachers, how many mothers, and how many fathers do not continue to treat the child as if it were a being that primarily needs help, instead of viewing the child as a being that has its own value, as a being with immense personal possibilities. To accept an impoverished perception of the child is to accept the final impoverishment of the child's possibilities. And as a consequence of this the limitation of the teacher who is with the child, and the institution that receives the child.



Uniqueness

As regards the role of the institution, and the way it chooses to work, it has always been necessary to be critical. Today it is more important than ever because the policy followed is a supportive one. We feel it is important to make a choice that is both ethical and cultural; a choice that is based on the perception of the child as a strong being. Only a choice of that kind can oppose the supportive notion. A child who is competent, who from birth has great possibilities and who has its own rights, contributes to the creation of an institution, and thus to the existence of the teacher who also has rights, and is not a subordinated or isolated individual. The choice we made in Reggio Emilia many years ago and which we confirm to-day, and this desire that a child should be perceived as a unique being, (a perception we use to restore and rebuild our cultural image of the man, the woman, the teacher, and the institution,) is probably the choice that unites the many delegations which visit Reggio Emilia.

Loris Malaguzzi, the creative and practical founder of the work in Reggio Emilia, has always pointed out that it is only possible to give utility value to the social service functions of the institutions if they free themselves of the role that has been forced upon them as being a supportive supplement to the family as a form of compensation.

The institutions must be given support as educational institutions and it is this vast network of educational practices with social importance that has been created in Reggio Emilia. Helped by this we have tried for decades to achieve good results of high educational standards. Malaguzzi combines these standards with the many service functions.

The children

Almost 35% of the children of 0-3 years-of-age attend the municipal nurseries, and 47% of the children of 3-6 years-of-age attend municipal pre-schools. It is not an experiment for an elite, for a few children or parents, or for selected teachers. It is a service for 2400 children of 0-6 years-of-age, for their families, and therefore for the city.

Our choice, as I have already mentioned, has been, and still is, to view the child as competent, curious, and constantly investigating the meaning of its surroundings.The child is a being who develops theories, who has its own ways of producing data and constructing hypotheses. It is capable of organizing itself; a child who is the producer and creator of knowledge, a child who possesses many different resources: emotional, social and intellectual.

These resources, however, cannot be realized unless right conditions are present. Children's possibilities become self-construction only in cooperation with others. It is therefore central for our institutions not to view the child as an isolated being but rather, a child with relationships to others. Primarily in relationships with children/teachers/families. It is this view of the child that has led us to construct, and we are still constructing, our view of the pre-school.

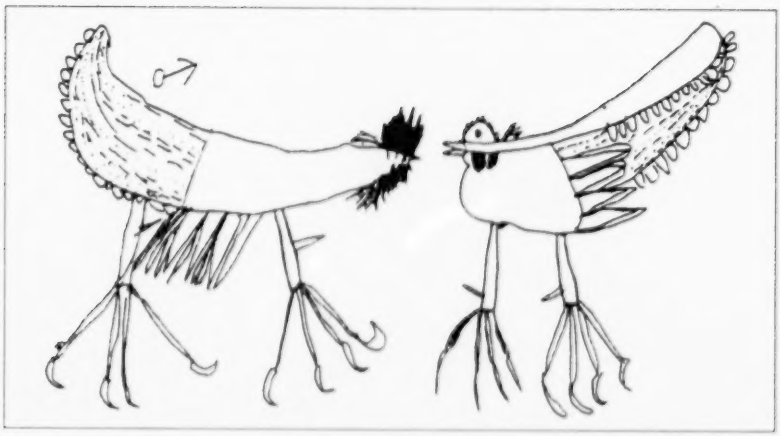
The pre-school is organized in a systematic way. As a large, living organism, whose segments are connected to the whole, not only because the segments are part of the organism, but primarily because connections between individual segments are created which give meaning to each individual segment.

It is in this perspective, based on the fact that the relations between the segments constantly function, that relations, which can be described by words like reciprocal trust, circularity and exchange, are viewed as a model for how the various people should live together; children, teachers, families. It is this strategy, which is absolutely necessary to get the process started, that leads to real participation. In this context the pre-school becomes a place where real education occurs. Where adults and children, confronted with each others' different theories, discover resources in one another that can be used in a joint development in the complex process that leads to self-construction. The possibility for turning these value theories into practice would be much greater if one could find partners and solidarity in the way everything is organised; the work, time, space, method, education of the teachers, and participation of the families.

The teacher

A crucial element shaping the profile of the project is, however, the possibility of changing earlier ways of practice, particularly the teacher's role. What we attempt is to make the teaching process a privilege, since we are convinced that education - at least in the way it is traditionally practised - will result in a reduction of the children's resources and destroy their chances of learning. But if teachers were able to disengage themselves from their education, an institution could exclude teaching. A different connection between teaching and the learning process is possible. Our attempt is based, as Loris Malaguzzi puts it, on making teaching and learning complementary and reversible resources. And one becomes a much better teacher if one is able, in a circular manner, to learn how to learn. It is not an easy operation and it is only possible if the teacher is able to learn how to learn together with the children; if the teacher accepts that he does not know everything, yes, accepts the fact that we know very little about children, and even can learn less about how to behave when together with children, and what we can do together with them and for them.

If these preconditions are fulfilled, perhaps the desire to explore and increase one's knowledge will change the form of teaching. The teacher must learn how to listen, how to see and understand the children's behaviour in order to measure his own procedure. Only in this way will the teacher be able to create situations where real learning takes place; situations where the adult and the child create new knowledge together. This is about creating knowledge, not transmitting it. The relationship between adults and children is normally characterized by the words 'authoritative procedure' or the exact opposite, rather than by words like 'interaction' and 'complementary'.



These words do not remain abstract if the adult is capable of discovering the child as a resource and if the adult is capable of being viewed by the child as a resource, an adult the child can get something from, and not just an adult who is repeating what the other adults say. There can be no circular movement if the adult is not capable of establishing a relationship with the child's resources.

A child is a being who explores all the time. But in order for it not to waste its possibilities, it needs an adult who can join the child in playing on the child's terms, an adult who shows interest and a capacity for wonder, an adult who can question himself into becoming an adult who experiments and becomes a kind of detective. Adults and children can explore together. They can be active individuals who explore together, acquire new knowledge together; it is a process which helps the child as well as the adult. It seems to us that only if the adult feels involved in the child's way of exploring things is it possible to create a state wherein observations can be made, thus gaining more information about the processes that take place in children's minds, and using these to enhance the knowledge of the teacher.

In short, one can say that on the one hand it is the role of the teacher that increases the children's extraordinary possibilities, in so far as the teacher functions as an organizer and the one who stimulates new situations, and on the other hand the teacher has the role of partner to the child's processes in exploring and discovering.

It is an up-bringing that on several levels cannot be content with systems that are pre-determined, with inflexible educational methods which prevent the teacher fac-

ing the role he has. The adult must primarily think ahead, create many theses, expand the number of possible ways of behaving, and multiply the views. It is necessary to become better at anticipating things, reading what happens inside the children. This is the sort of knowledge one cannot get through books but only by working with children in an educational practice in which one of the pillars is research and projects.

The project

We make no curriculum in advance but we try to base our planning on the resources, the methods, the materials, and the rooms that we use in the process with the children. We believe that projects which use different strategies, rather than inflexible and predetermined programmes, best respond to our way of working. This method allows us to focus on the children and what we experience together with the children. This makes it possible for us to move the interest away from what happens during the project to a focus on the interaction between the children, their procedures, and the adults' procedures. This is a way which is partially constructed in advance but is under construction as we go along, because we need to make room for all the things we have not anticipated. Our planning does not always anticipate everything. If we were not able to welcome the unexpected we would limit ourselves, thus impoverishing both ourselves and the children. From a methodological point of view it is as if we primarily focus on a recurring and permanent strategy for our work. A strategy that is based on continuous research. A research which is empiric and not academic, which we prefer to call behavioural research. It is carried out in an exact alternation between research and behaviour. A continuous registration is kept of what we have done in order to understand what we are going to do. This is a procedure that makes it necessary to be capable of reflecting critically on what is going on, to be available so that it is possible to change direction, make use of mistakes, and exploit the insecurity as a positive resource; a strategy which is not only a kind of style or behaviour but is also one of the few authentic ways in which teachers can take responsibility for their own development. Thanks to the fact that this method suits the idea of the circle, which in itself is one of the reasons for discussing oneself with one's colleagues and the families, it is possible to deduce the information, or in other words the material and the themes, which can serve as the basis for a discussion.

Naturally it is not possible to do anything like this without documentation of all the things that happen. We have become increasingly aware of how important documentation is. Not as a sort of reconstruction made after one has finished a project

but as a part of a process. Something that happens concurrently. To choose what one would like to document, to ask oneself why and how one would like to document, helps to establish and define what one has to do and how to do it. To stop and read the words, the dialogues, the interactions, the children's and the adults' attitudes means that one analyses and interprets what has happened. It is a recognition that improves one's, awareness and which enables one to determine which path to take together with the children. And only in the confrontation, in the discussion with colleagues, is it possible to think of new operations. It is only on the basis of an investigation made in the shared knowledge and experience on the spot that it is possible to help each other in the difficult task of listening, supporting or organising, and stimulating the dynamics and the processes of children.

We have always adhered to this method, and always tried to plan things according to it, by reserving time for meetings with all of the staff. Meetings to discuss and plan projects, to discuss the work with the children, the relations to the families, the organisational and functional aspects of the institution, all the while one is learning and increasing the ability to think and work together. But the confrontation, the dialogue, the exchange, can not be bounded by the limits of the institution. It must also involve the families. To this end, a project exists in which the parents' participation and leadership is an inseparable part of the basic education.

The educational process is a difficult matter which needs much cooperation and loyalty. The families' participation in the school's activities is beneficial not only to the children but also to the parents and the teachers, since their participation adds value and strength to their role. The parents must be helped to understand and share the process, the ability and competence which represent the child's existence, in order for them to discover the child in their son or daughter. The teachers must broaden their view, be stimulated by opposition, become more aware of the changes that occur in the children, in the families, and in society in general. In short, it is a view of a school where the internal as well as the external communication process is the central element which can draw so much attention to the sensitive and difficult themes of child education.

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Epilogue

Steen Larsen

Steen Larsen was born in Denmark in 1943. After a masters degree in psychology Steen Larsen served as a school psychologist for 8 years before he became an assistant professor in psychology at the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies.He has published books and articles on neuro-psychological and cognitive function in children, cerebral laterality and dyslexia and the possible impact of new technology on children's cognitive development and education.

Allow me, for a few minutes, to present my own view. I think that is fair because I am the only one who has not been able to say anything yet.

I have always been preoccupied by the question: How does it all begin? I think this is a fundamental question which for me is divided into two questions. First, astronomy: how did this universe all start? The second question is, I think, the most interesting: How do WE begin? To investigate and analyse the newborn child is to deal with beginnings. I think this is deeply fascinating.

Speaking about beginnings, we in our culture learn the sentence: "in the beginning was the Word". I have a personal competition between philosophers who have said the most erroneous sentence in history. I would say that John the evangelist, who formulated this sentence, is my favourite candidate. I am sure that his sentence is very close to the most erroneous opinion I can experience. I have a second candidate: Descartes, who formulated the sentence: "Cogito, ergo sum", -I think, therefore I exist. Descartes should have said his sentence backwards: I exist, therefore I think.

Due to such misconceptions, I am afraid that we have inherited an upside-down problem. If we believe that in the beginning is the word, we will base our childcare service and education to my mind on an extremely wrong conception. It seems to

me that we have planted our feet so deeply in heaven that we see everything upside down. From this position, learning seems to be something conscious, formal and conceptual.

In modern psychology, we have for the past few years begun to move into a brand new area of understanding of these topics. Several years ago Benjamin Libet made some extremely interesting investigations. I shall spare you the complicated details. The main result was that half a second after a person has begun to work out an action, consciousness has begun to find out what is going on.

I think this is extremely interesting. Because, it says, - and please do not misunderstand me - consciousness is a wonderful tool. We can never be without it. Without consciousness there will never be a human society. But it is not in the beginning. It is a fraction of a second AFTER the beginning. Accordingly we should say: in the beginning is the child.

Let us take a look at modern research on the newborn child. I will give you one example. Condon and Sanders, at the University of Boston, directed high speed cameras down to the beds of newborn children, whose average age was 14 days. They filmed the conversation of the newborn children and the parents while the parents spoke to their children.

When they played the film in slow motion, they discovered that the tiny movements that newborn children make with their arms and legs were not accidental. They were synchronised with the rhythm of the parent' speech. The fundamental rhythm in the human language was already taken in by the little child.

The point is that speech development begins at birth. We could have figured that out without empirical research. Because we know already that 2-year-old children are able to speak. And this development did not of course start the day before. If they are able to speak at 2 years old, they have worked on it for at least 2 years.

On this background we can conclude:
The first year in human life, is the year, where you learn the most.
The second year in human life, is the year, where you learn next most.
The third year in a human life is the year, where you learn third most.

I will state the point that the newborn child is an extremely effective learning machine. One should perhaps not use the word "learning machine", because it is such a technical term. But it is clear what I mean by that.

Imagine that we took a newborn child and a professor of linguistics. Send them to the University of Peking, for example, and tell them to learn Chinese. 5 years later we arrive and examine them. Who speaks Chinese? Nobody will be in doubt of the result.

But now comes the point. After we have realised that the child has learned much more effectively, we accept that the professor turns to the child and begins to teach the child how one should learn. I think this is an interesting paradox.

Let me finish this little presentation by saying that I think what we have to do now is turn the whole thing on its feet again. If we do not distinguish between formal and informal learning, we risk putting the child on its head, believing that children only learn in formal learning settings.Turn it around 180 degrees so it stands on its feet.

And from this position I will address some questions to each of you here on the panel.

This book is a book about young children's right to a high quality of life. It is written for adults who care for young children and feel responsible for the ongoing improvement of the life conditions of young children and the educational standards we offer them.

The European Childcare conference, "Educare in Europe" was held in Copenhagen from 14 -16 October 1992.

The purpose of the conference was to contribute to the ongoing discussion in Europe on how to care for young children away from their homes. Social policy makers tend to see early childhood care and education as a means of integrating young mothers into the workforce.
Our wish was to broaden the discussion by looking also at the needs of children - developmental needs, learning needs and need for quality care.

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